■ World / A8
US television entertainer Johnny Carson; 79

■ Across / A15
DOH lifts meningococcemia alert in Baguio

■ Entertainment
'The End' zooms in on 66-year-old Pinoy movie house

■ Business / B1
Stocks breach psychological barrier

Among the Bayan / A10
Singil sa koryente, dapat bang tasan?
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Shun gambling money, Church personnel told

By Blanche S. Rivera

TWO Catholic social bodies from 'yambing' money' and 'video-k-ke-ke-ke'.

The influential Catholic Bishops Conference of

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

DTI probes 2 companies for alleged pyramiding

By Nestor W. Domingo

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry has announced all leads of two companies in separate hearings on their alleged involvement in pyramid schemes, as it warned the public against participating in such enterprises. De-

Tuesday, January 25, 2005 ● 36 pages | vol. 39 | no. 45

Jamby calls for Mike's resignation

Says family no longer into logging

MAGNIFICENT. We have seen forests logging for 30 years, and we have not been in mining for a quarter of a century.

DEFENDER stands by his sudden statement but admits he had not done thorough research.

By Michael Lim Ubac

SEN. JAMBY Madrigal demanded not only an apology from Environment Secretary Michael Defensor for mislogging her family but also his resignation.

"We must resign. He has failed in his duties. He has done more harm than good. He has done the environment great injury, he has misunderstood his opportunity to serve the country," Madrigal said yesterday on a privilege speech.

Madrigal delivered the speech a day after Defensor accused her family of operating illegal logging concessions in Aurora and Quirino where hundreds of people died last year due to landslides traced to massive logging.

The secretary also claimed that the senator owned several mining companies.

Defensor mentioned the Madrigals' holdings in logging and mining following the opposition senator's accusation that the government's anti-illegal logging campaign had unwittingly since twelve poachers.

Gov accuses top DENR exec of protecting Zambo loggers

By Fe Zamora

A TOP environment official is giving the "royal treatment" to big-time loggers in Zamboanga del Norte, hindering the campaign to stop 400 acres of logging in the province, according to Gov. Rolando Yebes.

Yebes identified the official as Ramon Paje, undersecretary for operations of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The governor said Paje issued on Dec. 23, 2004, a memorandum that allowed Ducon Logging Co. to transport 2,281.44 cubic meters of logs from the "Triple S-R" area (Siocon-Sirawai-Roxas) and Bolquion forests to processing plants in Zamboanga City.

Ducon is owned by David Consing, a top

PNP sacks 2 cops who 'pressured' Aklan amok

By Christine V. Figueroa and Christine O. Avendaño

TWO POLICE officers were sacked yesterday for supposedly trying to pressure PO3 Jonathan Morelos—the policeman who went amok and turned the Malacañang festival into a carnage—into accepting an alleged P500,000 bribe from a suspected drug lord.

PNP Director General Edgar Aglipay announced the relief of the two officers and said 54 other members of the Aklan police had been temporarily removed from their posts or they could undergo stress management counseling.

Aglipay identified the two officers who allegedly tried to pressure Morelos into accepting the bribe money as SPO3 Ysidro Ticbaen and PO1 Jimmy Estonactoc Cagaoa.

Eight people, including the 46-year-old provincial police chief, the Rubio town police chief and a 10-year-old girl, were killed when Morelos opened fire with his armalite rifle during the Jan. 20 celebration of the feast of the Sto. Niño.

"They were being relieved for allegedly pressuring PO1 Morelos into accepting a bribe," Aglipay told reporters.

Investigators are looking into the possibility that Ramonwen, four and alleged shooter from the group of suspected drug traffickers Jose Candro had delete the police station in desperation.

The 54 other officers were temporarily stripped of their assignments because they actually saw how Morelos had gone berserk and, having witnessed such a gory incident, would need "stress management debriefing and counseling," said Director Arturo Lomibao, Task Force Kalibo chief.

The counseling sessions will be handled by PNP psychiatrists.

Another set of 70 of Aklan's 465 officers will be subjected to stress management.

At the time he went on the shooting rampage, Morelos was the PNP's star witness against Candro, having been part of the team that arrested the alleged drug lord on Customs island in 2003.

As the town of the Senate in

Top customs exec, 'dummy' dismissed

By Armand N. Nocum

THE OFFICE of the Ombudsman has ordered the dismissal of top Bureau of Customs official for using a misleading alleged ill-gotten wealth, and the sacking of his subordinates for grave misconduct and dishonesty.

Fired from his service were Bureau of Customs miscellaneous division chief Fee Aquilino Ignatio and her staff member, customs operations officer III Arlene R. Bermudez. For illegally keeping as the source of Aquilino's expensive four-wheel drive vehicle.

In a 12-page decision issued on Jan. 20, Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo found Aquilino guilty of unexplained ill-gotten wealth.

Ombudsman investigator also declared that Aquilino, who had worked at the Bureau of Customs for 20 years, owned many properties than she had declared in her statement of assets, liabilities and Net Worth (SALN).

Aquilino's annual salary was P249,876. In her SALN, she declared a net worth of P2.5 million in 1999 and P2.7 million in 2001.

Among her properties were a P2.2 million condominium at the Joint Seaview Towers on Roxas Boulevard, a 91 million house and lot in Bacoor, Cavite, and her 2001 Honda CRV and several Toyotas.

"On top of these, Bureau of Intelligence records disclosed that Aquilino has been receiving, and disburse, inside documents to cartels in China, Hong Kong and the United

Palace, solons rebuff reported US spy branch

By John Lahoy Javellana and Cynthia D. Balana

A REBUFF from the Palace and a barrel of protest from some members of Congress.

"Definitely our position is we will screw our own problems and if it involved their assistance, that's the only time their intervention is for, officially, it carry not for accept able to us," National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales Jr. said yesterday, reacting to the reported revelation by the United States of new espionage unit for deployment to foreign countries, possibly including the Philippines.

Gonzales told the Inquirer that if there was indeed such a new spy agency under the US Department of Defense, its operation in this country would not be allowed under Philippine laws.

Presidential aide Ciriaco Beltran of Antipolo and Joel Tesoro of Bayan Muna slammed the reported US move.

Beltran expressed concern that Washington might use the espionage unit to spy on members of the Philippine Congress.

The Washington Post said the new espionage unit—called the Strategic Support

FUN AFTER FIRE
A foreign tourist jogs on a beach near empty beach at Boracay, some of days after a fire hit the fine markets of the popular island resort.

A3
WEATHER FORECAST
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TUESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2005
Second FRONTPAGE

GMA urges Luisita owners, workers to sit down and talk

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has finally stepped into the long-drawn-out labor strike at the Cojuangco-owned Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac, more than two months after some people... five workers and two children—were killed in a bloody dispersal by police and military forces.

"We urge both parties to resume negotiations at the earliest and convene sharing a common good of industrial peace," she said, even mindful and cautious of outside parties who intend to exacerbate the situation for their own selfish agenda," the President said in a statement released yesterday.

Talks between Luisita management and labor had stalled when both parties refused to return to the negotiating table after the workers went on strike on Nov. 6, 2004.

"Let us get to the heart of this problem, invest our good will and energies in resolving it peacefully," the President said.

Mr. Arroyo had been abruptly prompted by not only failing to intervene sooner to end the standoff at the sugar plantation but also for purportedly siding with the Cojuangco family.

This was the first time the President commented on the matter.

"We have a position completely for the poor, to give hand to their problems, to share their dreams for a better life, to help in the shaping of a strong nation—all within the context of respect for our laws," the President said.

Hosting another spate of the latter at the hacienda, the country's bishops yesterday appealed to the government to exercise maximum tolerance in dealing with its defiant workers.

Officials of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (personally) made the appeal to President Arroyo at Malacañang yesterday in behalf of the workers who returned to the negotiating table after the workers went on strike on Nov. 6, 2004.

Earlier, Bishop Florentino Cinense said he urged the President to give orders for "maximum tolerance and ... whatever is possible which is not against the law than [means the violence]."

With Marvin S. Rivera

Dismiss Susan's suit, Gloria asks high court

By Philip C. Tubeza

SAYING Fernando Poe Jr.'s death was an "opportunity to bury the hatchet and move on," President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday asked the Supreme Court sitting as the Presidential Electoral Tribunal to throw out the election protest he had filed against her.

Mr. Arroyo also asked the PET to reject the petition of Poe's widow, Susan Roces, to substitute for her late husband in the case since there was no legal basis for her to do so.

In a 21-page statement, Mr. Arroyo, through her lawyers Romulo Macalintal and Alberto Agra, said Poe's death last Dec. 14 effectively ended his protest. Poe had claimed he was cheated of victory in the May 10, 2004 polls.

"The protest filed by [Poe]... died with him. The right to contest the office of the president or vice president to PET and is non-transferable, non-heritable and non-delegable," the President's lawyers said.

They said Roces had no legal leg to stand on since, under PET rules, only the registered candidates who received the second and third highest number of votes could file a protest 30 days after the proclamation of the winner.

"[Roces'] spouse, any taxpayer or voter, by political party or anyone for that matter cannot substitute for the deceased protestant... [Roces] is not entitled to the office and, therefore, cannot be the substitute protestant. She was also void," the President's lawyers said.

The lawyers also said Roces could not claim that public interest required that the election protest continue.

"Public interest even justifies the dismissal of the election protest... public interest swings in both directions. The protestant has no monopoly of public interest. The interest of protestee who received the greatest majority, should also be respected," they said.

"This would be an opportune time to bury the hatchet and move on. The political republic of the nation during this period of national recovery must be vigorously pursued by all," the President said.

In challenging Roces' protest of the case, the President's lawyers used the arguments of the Roces' own lawyer, Romy Brillantes, in a previous election protest.

Brillantes, representing Roces Marie Bay, Bataan, had argued in the election protest filed by the late Ed. Rolando Mendiola against Abbas "that the widow of the deceased protestant cannot replace the latter because in our system of election, there is no provision for substitution."

Brillantes, however,

Int'l media group arriving today to investigate RP journalists' murders

A [illegible] from the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) is arriving today to investigate the spate of murders of reporters in the country, it was announced yesterday.

The mission, led by delegates from Australia and Indonesia, will meet the families of murdered journalists, police investigators looking into the cases and the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, the union said in a statement.

During their seven-day trip beginning Tuesday the group will visit the cities of General Santos, Iloilo, Legaspi and Manila before presenting the preliminary results of their inquiry on Jan. 21.

An IFJ report this month said the murder of 13 Filipino journalists in 2009 made the country one of the world's most dangerous places for journalists to operate.

The killings had created a crisis for the free press in the Philippines and tarnished the country's democratic credentials, said the IFJ, the world's largest organization of journalists with more than 500,000 members.

The Brussels-based lobby group has charged that 53 journalists had been killed since democracy was restored in 1986 and not a single person has been convicted.

The government has said the IFJ's report was misleading. AFP

SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy S. Molmisa

WHAT'S INSIDE

Siot takes the blame for Game 3 debacle

SMC 103/BEER (4 more minutes)
T Yap 4-7 • Go 10 pts • Barroga 7 pts

COACH Siot Tanquingcen is man enough to admit his shortcomings.

Yesterday, the sophomore Ginebra San Miguel coach took full responsibility for the defeat the Gin Kings absorbed in the pivotal Game 3 of their semifinal series against the Red Bull Barako.

"I lost Game 3 because I was simply outcoached," said Tanquingcen after his Gin Kings took a 96-91 loss in the Icon Metalco Philippine Cup best-of-five duel Sunday night.

With a 2-1 lead, coach Jong Uichico and the Brewmen could set up a rematch and arrange a best-of-seven championship showdown with the Tide Si Yot Phone Pals.

"It was not their (Gin Kings') fault," said Tanquingcen. "I mean I didn't do what should have been done.

"I didn't give them the right instructions on what to look for or what to do in the court. The problems were not situational. It was basically the shots that San Miguel took away from us in the endgame."

TANQUINGCEN

The Gin Kings led 91-90 with 1:40 to play—fueled by the majority of the 12,905 crowd at the Big Dome—for almost six minutes before going into the final stretch as the Brewmen recorded seven straight baskets, including two jumpers by Jun Magsanoc and Eric Menk were hoisted up by San Miguel's smothering defense while Rodney Santos failed to finish a layup.

"San Miguel was more prepared for us," said Tanquingcen of his former ballclub. "They made several adjustments and the coaching staff did an excellent job getting the team back into the groove."

Tanquingcen was the hero's assistant coach in San Miguel for many seasons before taking the coaching reins from Allan Caidic at Barangay Ginebra last year.

Tanquingcen said the Gin Kings would be making only minimal adjustments in Game 4. He implied it would change schedule not to continue to lose last two games.

"If there are adjustments to make, it will only be a few," he said. "It will be more on fine-tuning because you could be drastic on changing a formula that has been working for you in the series."

The Gin Kings did what job hunting Danny Seigle's scoring output lost it only allowed by Brewmen reserves and a balanced scoring attack.

Seigle, who averaged 15.5 points in games 1 and 2, 36d only 14 points to Santos' 3, but Glenn Rueda and Rondon Bruinwers picked up the scoring slack.

"They (Brewmen) tried to get more players involved and it seems their game plan worked," said Tanquingcen.

CLEM Rocete of San Miguel breaks loose from Ginebra's defense in Game 3 of their semifinal series at the Araneta Coliseum.

SMC adopts RP five

By Jane Navarro

NO LESS than giant San Miguel Corp. will be the godfather of the national team being fostered by the Philippine Basketball Association.

Commissioner Bob Itah announced this yesterday after a PBA board meeting where the country's largest food and beverage company sets up presidential headquarters of the nation's return to the year's Pilot Asian-themed multiple-and other tournaments.

Relieved SMC will shoulder the expenses of the team even as the Board of Governors decided to let Ben's solution the budget proposed at 8P over its first team.

Relieved the board had already approved allocation and shares for the team that now has a still-looking for owner when it can secure the league.

"Although I am sorry the homing of the national shrine will be here, period," Itah said. "The program will continue while the budget is

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'Double-book' system costing gov't billions of pesos in lost taxes

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

PHILIPPINE banking has a "double-book" system allowing companies to conceal their financial information—one for computing taxes and another for loan applications.

Industrialist Raul T. Concepcion said unscrupulous firms chase the government out of billions of pesos in taxes by underreporting their income and taxes in the books they submit to the Bureau of Internal Revenue to reduce their tax dues.

These same companies present a different set of books to banks, inflating the true value of their income and properties, to get a higher loan or a sizable collateral value. "It's a practice long tolerated by banks because they don't want to lose clients by toughening up their lending requirements. I think it's time the President looked into this," he said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo's move ordering all agencies not to deal with private contractors that do not present their income tax returns as proof of their tax payments was commendable, Concepcion said.

However, it was not enough.

"The tax law was borne from bidding for government contracts but this would not anymore from getting loans from banks and getting away [with] not paying the right taxes," he said.

He suggested ban all banks by monetary board to base their loan approvals solely on BIR-certified income tax returns and financial statements.

By calling off the tax shade' access to bank loans, Concepcion said, those would be less incentive for companies to maintain different sets of financial books.

Seeking government revenues should not only be about imposing more taxes, it should also be about plugging holes in the collection of existing taxes, he added.

After having only one of her eight revenue measures approved by Congress last year, the President now set to implement administrative measures to boost collections.

Recently, Malacañang issued Executive Order No. 399 that would give congressional districts a bonus from the BIR's audit and investigation teams in paying at least 25 percent more in tax revenues they pay.

Based on EO No. 399 signed yesterday, the BIR commissioner could determine value business entities were qualified to avail of the five-year program which the President said was "designed to induce compliance and administration of voluntary compliance."

There were others safeguards in the EO. Qualified business units would be required to make a minimum tax payment for the first and last quarters (next 20 percent higher than their year-ago levels. The ratio of their tax payments to gross sales for the whole year and for the first quarter should also be equal or better year-ago levels.

The ratio of the net value-added tax or business to gross sales should be no lower than the previous year's or three-entity benchmark, whichever is higher.

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4 Indonesian 'big fish' bombers hunted in RP

PHILIPPINE security forces are hunting four Indonesian militant "big fish," including two suspects in the October 2002 Bali bombing, in a manhunt in the region on Mindanao island, an intelligence official said yesterday.

Philippine officials say there are nearly three dozen Indonesian and Malaysian militants hiding and training with a separatist faction of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the largest Moro rebel group in the country.

"There is no ongoing manhunt operation in coastal Mindanao," said Chief Supt. Ismael Rafanan, head of the Philippine National Police Intelligence Group. "We're after the big fish."

Military officials and analysts say that members of the Jemaah Islamiah (JI) network, which was blamed for the Bali bombing, regularly use Mindanao for training and refuge with the assistance of at least some MILF factions.

An Army commander told reporters the United States had been sharing intelligence with the Philippines to help capture four foreign militants, including two Indonesians named Umar Patek and Dulmatin, both suspected of involvement in the Bali bombing.

Shielded by MILF

He said the four militants were thought to be hiding with a unified MILF faction in Maguindanao.

Sidney Jones, Southeast Asia director for the International Crisis Group, earlier this month cited Indonesian intelligence sources as saying that Umar Patek and Dulmatin were the targets of a Philippine Air Force strike last June 18 in Central Mindanao.

Jones said the two suspected Bali bombers were not JI members but belonged to a little known Indonesian militant group called Rantera, named after a part town in West Java and which operated independently from the al-Qaida-linked JI.

Jemaah's cells

She said at least 65 foreign militants could be hiding in Mindanao. About half of them belonged to JI cells while the rest were from how-to-fix-other Indonesian militant groups.

US Ambassador to Manila Francis Ricciardone said 78 US Special Forces members were now in Mindanao working with Philippine troops to help track the location of foreign militants and rebel bases.

Saudi national held

Philippine officials said they were currently holding a Saudi national on suspicion that he was involved in a destabilization plot in Mindanao.

Mohammad Abdullah Asghay-za was detained at the Zamboanga City airport on Jan. 18 and flown to the national police headquarters in Manila.

"We have intelligence reports of his [connection] with certain activities in Mindanao which we think are detrimental to our security," said Faisal Rounis, an officer of the immigration bureau's intelligence division.

Officials said Asghazi had come in and out of the country several times and that the Saudi said he was in the country for "humanitarian work." Reuters, AFP

DTI probes 2 firms for alleged pyramiding

From page B-1

gained as multilevel marketing (MLM) ventures.

Under probe for alleged violations of the Consumer Act of the Philippines are JC Marketing Corp. and First Quadrant. If the special hearing officer of the Bureau of Trade Regulation and Consumer Protection (BTRCP) determines that there is strong evidence against JC Marketing and First Quadrant, the cases will be submitted to the Office of Legal Affairs for formal hearings.

Executive Order No. 913 empowers the DTI to proceed with a formal investigation independent of pending criminal or civil suits against companies involving violations of trade and industry laws.

If found guilty by the DTI, the two companies may be slapped administrative sanctions, including an order to stop their pyramiding operations, a fine of between P500 and P1 50,000 plus a maximum of P1,000 for each day of continuing violation, confiscation or suspension of permits from the DTI, and other damages.

Bobby Vicente C. Mendoza, a lawyer assigned to the BTRCP said JC Marketing had submitted its papers to the DTI on Dec. 27, 2000, while First Quadrant was expected to submit its paper by Feb. 2. The next hearing on the JC Marketing case was set on Jan. 26, while that for First Quadrant was set on Feb. 15.

Mendoza said JC Marketing and First Quadrant had been directed to remove from their business plans the earning system that the task force found to be pyramiding in nature.

Article XI of the Consumer Act prohibits the use of chain distribution plans or pyramid sales schemes in the sale of consumer products. The law defines pyramiding as "sales devices whereby a person, on condition that he makes an investment, is granted the right to receive a refund (remuneration) the right in excess of profit one or more additional persons" who are then granted similar rights if they themselves invest money.

Erich Underwriters Adviser Alfredo E. Crisostomo Jr. said using the MLM or networking scheme to sell products or services was not illegal in itself.

"But (at the law says further), when the scheme is used in a way that income is generated primarily from recruiting others into the company instead of selling products, it becomes pyramiding," Crisostomo said.

First Quadrant

Unlike the high-profile First Quadrant, little is known about the operations of JC Marketing.

First Quadrant's website identified the other incorporators of the company as Andrew U. Chua, Carlos G. Tampoco, Soriano S. Tampoco and Rhoden Tampoco Tampoco, a name in-line of the environment secretary.

According to First Quadrant's website, the company was established on Jan. 8, 2000 and was "an instant success in just one year."

"In its first and second year, First Quadrant earned the 2002 and 2003 National Consumers Excellence in Direct Selling Gold Level Marketing Company of the Year," it said.

Unlike similar MLM companies, First Quadrant boasts that it sells only Filipino-made products. The backbone of its manufacturing arm is Tri-Top Manufacturing, which was hailed as Best Shoe Manufacturer in the 2002 National Consumer Excellence Awards that was sponsored by the National Consumer Affairs Foundation.

First Quadrant also co-owns and manages the following companies—DTOF Leather Supply, DOYEE Shoes, Sew Shoes Philippines Inc. and Newport Fashion Circle Corp.

Also, the company supplies shoes for the following brands—Oleg Cassini, Lady Bunton's, ISF Elegance, Hilton, Stiletto, Queen Beautiful, Bessa Taylor (New York), Bitch a report from Feliz Guerrero in

IN THE KNOW

What is 'pyramiding'?

Pyramiding is prohibited in the sale of consumer products under Republic Act No. 7394 or the Consumer Protection Act.

The law defines a "consumer sales distributor" or "chain distributor scheme" as a scheme that involves any person, or condition that the benefit, the right to accept for profit some consideration which will also be granted such right to other than himself.

It does not involve what basis or structure the system takes, as long as the person employing such a scheme derives profits primarily from recruitment. PDI Research

Palace, solons rebuff reported US spy branch

From page A-1

Branch—had been operating in Iraq, Afghanistan and other undisclosed locations for about two years.

Potential targets

An early planning memo on Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, sales reportedly covered the task, called its focus need to "transcending target countries," such as the Philippines, Indonesia, Somalia, Yemen and Georgia.

The small classified list memo provide the US military's elite Special Operations units with intelligence using advanced technology help create spies in foreign countries, and resist potential targets. The New York Times said, quoting unnamed senior Pentagon officials.

The memo represent a prime example of Rumsfeld's desire to expand the Pentagon's ability to gather human intelligence—information gathered by spies rather than by technological means, both within the military services and the Defense Intelligence Agency, whose focus is on intelligence used in the battlefield.

Stepping up intelligence

"It is accurate and should not be surprising that the Department of Defense is attempting to improve its long-standing human intelligence capability," Pentagon spokesperson Lawrence Di Rita told Reuters.

"If principal conclusion of the 9/11 Commission report is that the US human intelligence capability must be improved across the board," he said, referring to the US panel which probed the possible intelligence failures before the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks on the United States.

Asked if the United States needed to seek clearance before the clandestine teams could operate in the Philippines, Di Rita said: "They have to register with us."

He said he was not aware of any official report about such an Asian intelligence unit.

"We want to find out how it is organized," Molano said, adding that he had, however, no plans to take the matter up officially with American authorities.

Restardone should explain

The US media reports did not say why the Philippines would be a target, but the United States has long expressed concern over the insurgencies confronting President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration, including the communist New People's Army and the Moro separatist rebels.

Bolstered until US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone should bring Congressmen and senators about any entry of American spy agents on the country.

"What are they reporting their information to and against whom is the information?" asked Roilo Golez.

"The US has long been known to finance war between military and political factions in nations where they interfere and, in the process, insinuate itself and its policies even deeper," he said.

Covert operations

Ricciardone urged Ms Arroyo to assist Philippine Independence.

"It is highly possible that covert operations of US intelligence in Philippine territory may be limited to intelligence gathering but would take include assassinations and kidnings to create a climate of terror and justify US armed involvement in the country," the senior said.

He said it only showed how contemptuous the United States was of the country's independence.

Some intelligence experts said the creation of the new unit is the result of anger in Washington's hands for intelligence dissonance between Rumsfeld's Defense Department and the CIA, the Times said.

"This is really a giant net ban. Ok," said Walden F. Long, a former analyst of the Defense Humint Intelligence Service, a branch of the Defense Intelligence Agency.

US backing for GMA

Among the CIAs measures, former intelligence officials have said, were that an expanded Pentagon role to intelligence-gathering could, by design or effect, escape the strict congressional oversight that applies to most such operations when they are carried out by intelligence agencies, the Times said.

But other analysts said the teams are merely the latest incarnation of espionage units that the Army, Navy and Air Force operated throughout the Cold War to secure spies, detailed defectors and gather information about foreign weapons systems in countries like China and the Soviet Union.

Speaking at a forum yesterday with the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines, Ricciardone praised the Arroyo administration for its fight against terrorism and corruption, and pledged continued support for it.

'Bombers will lose'

"When our friends are strong and secure, we, too, are stronger and more secure," Ricciardone said. "We are on the side of the government of the Philippines, no question about it, when it comes to combating terrorism."

While the ongoing peace negotiations to end the Moro Islamic Liberation Front's 28-year insurgency were welcome, Ricciardone said Washington would provide military support against those continuing to carry out attacks.

"What we want to see is a peace [agreement] that will be durable and that will permit development to go ahead," he said.

But if certain elements of the MILF were "going to hide bombers from Bush, or train bombers or hide kidnappers, or get involved in the drug trade, the law enforcement and security forces of the Philippines are going to go after them and we are going to help them," Ricciardone said.

"We are going to help, we are going to keep making inroads, and the kidnappers and bombers at the end of the day are going to lose." With reports from The New York Times, AP and AFP

Shun gambling money, Church personnel told

From page A-1

the Philippines nominates this stand on the controversial issue of receiving money from gambling and gambling investments.

It reiterated its collective policy during the three of 10/PHR plenary assembly on Sunday by denouncing illegal gambling and fighting its expansion in different forms.

The body also instructed all the clergy and Church personnel to refrain from soliciting or receiving funds from illegal or illegal gambling.

"We express great sorrow if individual religious leaders and/or institutions had solicited funds for charitable purposes from public monies gained from illegal gambling," the CBCP said in a statement issued on Sunday and signed by its president, Davao Archbishop Fernando Capalla.

Confusion

Yesterday, Capalla spokesperson for the conclusion brought about by statements made by the CBCP's legal officer that some bishops and priests might have benefited from gambling funds.

"We're sorry for the confusion it has caused, but we will not apologize for anything the decision we did not do anything wrong," Capalla said in a press conference at the CBCP office in Manila.

"We cannot help deny that the CBCP as a body has ever validated or knowingly received funds from illegal gamblers," he said in response statement.

Some 80 bishops from all over the Philippines attended the plenary assembly that deliberated on this issue at the Asia Pius Center in Manila.

Credibility attacks

The gathering was held amid what Capalla called "attacks on the credibility and integrity" of the CBCP after lawmakers questioned its legal officer on the possibility of dirty money flowing into the Catholic Church.

Capalla stressed that no member of the CBCP had received money from illegal gambling, but he admitted that the conference was not aware of the dealings of individual bishops and the priests in their dioceses.

He said those who deeply care for the poor, we would be first not to judge their consciences on this matter. It is more unfortunate than it is our situation of poverty today, public funds gained from legal gambling are often the only resources for the poor to be assisted adequately," the CBCP statement said.

"Even if it is for helping, the CBCP does not encourage this manner of helping the poor. It cannot condone the condoning, promoting and sponsoring the vices of gambling and thereby scandalize the faithful," it said.

The bishops have expressed varying, even conflicting views, on gambling, particularly on jueteng, an illegal numbers game that is popular among the poor.

Former CBCP president Oscar Cruz leads the national crusade against jueteng, but another official, Cebu can Bishop Ireneo Pedrosa, is in favor of legalizing jueteng in order to derive more revenues.

Capalla admitted in an earlier interview that he himself had endorsed pure commitments on government institutions operating legal gambling, including veteran, and offering aid to the poor.

Church teaching

The CBCP president said the Church has been teaching that "games of chance or wagers are not in themselves contrary to justice."

"But moral teaching does not prohibit some forms of gambling in certain situations, in consequent. It does not prohibit people or institutions from Church-related ones, from investing funds in this from such gambling," the CBCP said.

"However, applying the moral principles to the specific Philippine situation, the CBCP has deemed it necessary to state that the form of gambling that is organized, widespread and systemic, whether legal or illegal, is not desirable," it said.

Defining it especially a PDR bill-

CAPALLA

Correction

IN THE JAN. 20 issue, a story on Page A6—"Banquet takes up cudgels for mayor"—misnamed the name of the deputy director general of Bangsa Philippines, the political party of Senator Juan Ponce Enrile.

The correct name of the Bangsa Philippines deputy director general is Rolando "Jong" Cacnio—not Richard Gaite.

Readers may send their reasons for corrections of factual errors to Corrections, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 185 Yakal St., Makati City, 1200, Philippines; fax nos. 896-6160 local 8080 and 894-2978; e-mail address corrections@inquirer.com.ph. Complete name and full address of the writer or organization of person making readers' rebuttals; the story subject and the number or issue of the story should be included. Also indicate local/long distance rates.

Ateneo golfers hold fort after 36 holes

TRAPTON—Medic Sia helped Ateneo hold ground with a 35-point effort as the Loyola-based shotmakers remained sole ahead after the penultimate round inclusive of the 4th Fontana Interscholastic golf championships at the Tagaytay Midlands Golf and Country Club here.

Tee joined hands with Tim Padilla, who boasted back with 21 after failing to count on the first nine, and Brian Lachica Qui for 84 points on three-over-par 144 to the hole behind 280.

Ateneo maintained a 20-point lead over archrival La Salle, which made 93 for the day behind Oliver Ilan's 32 and William Wang's 30 for 185.

The Loyola-based golfers, getting 33 each from Gianlino Chan and Ron Gabriellan, showed up Ateneo, 46-40, in the continued col. Ivga-high school division and pulled away by a hefty margin in boys' elementary.

Ateneo medics gained the two more winners in Ramon Gonzalez, Gianlino Chan, Ron Gabriel Tan and Olivia Santos-led Ateneo Grade-ng to 35 shots in the combined girls' college-high school play, 93-78.

Ateneo's Edward Pasay, Mickie Bahlis, Bino Ashe Paz, Carlo Lagrada and RJ Ramos also posted a huge margin in the boys' grade school.

The Ateneo boys had a 1-0 nod against the 35-19 College San Agustin going into the final round of the four-stanzas.

Junior Tambunting and Mike Alejandro—La Salle-Lipa's 1-2 punch—scored 20 and 10, respectively, and ushered their team to a 30-point spread in boys' high school play. UEST won at 163 while LSGH had 140.

In the team relays competitions, Tanchul Junior Dimahoyos of Global City Innovative at 56 in boys' college action. Tambunting was up by the crew Mike Ilee of LSGH, 45-60, as boys' high school elder Patrol missed a one-point lead over Nelson Espesol of Golden Acres, 55-54.

In girls' play, crystal Espesol of La Pilata High tallied 51-59 to go five up over Debbie de Villa in the college-high school category, and Brandy Mendoza of St. Pedro Poveda and Dustine Sotto of Poveda IV won, 5-1 05.

Nonie Pang of Hiraoparen International, JP del Claro and Gerald Hompoyo, JR Gonzales tied single 70-point totals in the boys' open division. Dr Claro scored 42, Gonzales 38 and Pang 34.

Kiamco heads Filipino romp

WARREN Kiamco led a Filipino invasion in the 2003 411Games Japan 9-Ball Open in Tokyo over the weekend.

The Gilbranco-owned Joanna Orcollo at the finale to claim the top purse of about P100,000. Orcollo won the equivalent of P200,000.

Earlier, Kiamco and Orcollo trounced countrymen Ronnel Gallego and Antonio Lining, respectively, in the semifinals.

Kiamco said last night her husband's victory was very welcome as they need the money for the ongoing construction of their new house in Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City.

She won bring the haul from Gallego and Lin-

KIAMCO poses with trophy and check of P140,000.

ing received P100,000 each.

Former snooker champion Marlon Manalo and the rookie of the event once again underscored the Filipinos' superiority in the sport.

"Once again, Whereas, Joanna, Rubeng Glenlopez and Marlon Quinsay brought honor to the country," said Manalo.

Manalo recalled that in the 2004 World 8-Ball Championships in Fujairah, United Arab Emirates, last September, Filipinos pulled off a stunning 1-2-3-4 finish with Efren "Bata" Reyes emerging as champion.

Ilo Mitsuoh placed second, Alex Pagulayan was third and Francisco "Django" Bustamante fourth. Marlon Ramos-Diaz, Correspondent

San Miguel Corp. adopts RP five

under scrutiny.

Alpaka hosts manager Angel Tulli trusts the group ended to find ways to maximize the RP team budget.

The board also approved Ildo's monitoring plan to affect the budgetary requirements of the RP team while giving the go signal to Reyes and assistant coach Alex Cameron their fourth Kuwa and China scouting trip.

Other proposals which the board steadily approved were the creation of a PBA Hall of Fame and the grand reunion of all retired and active PBA players when the league holds its 35th anniversary on April 9.

Discussion was not negatively by SMC's support for the national five considering that to head, Bowling Congress served as a great diversion for basketball in the '90s.

It was under Cojuangco's patronage that the RP team last won the ABC in 1981, when the PBA stars to-day's globally through its major stars like you and in 2007 for the nationals to entrance the Olympics in 2008.

Hontiveros keeps tenpin bowling post

HONTIVEROS (third from left) with (from left) Romeo Ojo Jr. and Perardo

WILLIAM SON sports figure Steve Hontiveros of Pasig Bowling Association has been re-elected president of the Philippine Bowling Congress for the next two years.

Hontiveros recently quaried of the Philippine Olympic Committee and World Olympians Association.

Also elected during the PBC convention held last Saturday at the Central Hobby Country Club in Pasig City were Jaime Dichiano of MPBA, executive vice president; Danny Santos of PBAC secretary general; and Ido in Pineda of PCBA, treasurer.

The president of PBC's 25 member associations automatically become members of the board.

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The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Gozon

Strong quake panics tsunami-hit Indonesia

Aceh rebels prepare for truce and rebuilding

JAKARTA—Indonesia was rocked by a powerful earthquake Monday that caused panic and damaged dozens of homes, as the government and Aceh's separatist rebels prepared to suspend a decades-long civil war in the interest of helping rebuild the tsunami-shattered province.

The epicenter of the 6.2-magnitude quake—the to the east of Aceh—was shallow, so under the tremor did not cause widespread damage, and patients at the main tsunami-battered fled the building.

"They were shouting 'water, water' because they feared waves," said Dr. Rizki Lutfia Dilo, adding that the hospital had reinforced its injured patients as a result of the quake.

On Dec. 26, Indonesia's western tsunami-hit with a much more powerful 9.0-magnitude earthquake, triggering waves that killed anywhere from 162,000 to 220,000 people in 11 countries around the Indian Ocean.

A month after the disaster, people remained anxious and nervous even in areas not directly affected.

In an related province west of Thailand's capital, thousands fled their homes early Monday after reports spread that a new earthquake had spawned tsunamis in four major hydroelectric dams that were about to break open and flood the region.

The governor of Nanchanburi province went on the radio and the head of the government agency in charge of dam held a news conference to try to reassure people that the rumors were false and urge them to remain home.

The number of relief camps in Indonesia's Aceh province has dropped by about 75 percent in the past week, a UN official said Monday.

The "dramatic decrease" in the camps—from 300 to less than 100—was good news because relief workers can now concentrate their resources on outside help, said Joel Boutroue, head of UN relief efforts in Aceh.

Most people were moving in with relatives, and a few were returning to their villages along the devastated west coast, he said.

To remedy the infancy of aid to hundreds of thousands of survivors, governments in the two worst-hit countries of Indonesia and Sri Lanka were trying on Monday to ease tensions with indigenous rebel movements that threatened to hold up supplies.

Indonesian officials agreed to meet with Aceh rebel leaders later this week in Finland to negotiate a ceasefire in the province, where separatists have been fighting for an independent homeland for nearly 30 years, according to Finland's Crisis Management Initiative, headed by former President Martti Ahtisaari.

"There is a hope that the scale of the disaster and the momentum for rebuilding Aceh will finally lead to social and political reconciliation between Indonesia and [the rebels]," said Dewi Anwar Fortuna, a prominent analyst and adviser Indonesian presidential advisor.

Despite an informal ceasefire announced by both sides since the disaster, there have been isolated reports of fighting, raising concern about the security of relief operations in Aceh. On Sunday, the Indonesian military said it had killed 200 alleged rebels in the last four weeks.

In Sri Lanka, Norway's foreign minister met separately with the country's prime minister and a top guerrilla leader over the weekend to help resolve a dispute over aid distribution in the island nation, where the tsunami killed almost 31,000 people and displaced another 1 million.

The Tamil Tiger rebels repeatedly accused the government of obstructing aid deliveries to rebel-controlled areas in Sri Lanka's north and east, allegations the government denies.

At Norway's urging, the two sides agreed to discuss the creation of a joint body that would ensure aid is fairly disbursed. If they do agree to such cooperation, it would represent serious progress in a conflict that has lingered for two decades. AFP

US television entertainer Johnny Carson laughs on the set of NBC television's "Tonight Show," in this undated photo. AFP

Johnny Carson, former host of 'Tonight Show,' dead at 79

LOS ANGELES—Johnny Carson, a pioneer of late night television comedy as the long-time host of NBC-television's "Tonight Show," died on Sunday at the age of 79.

Carson, who stepped down as host of the "Tonight Show" in 1992, when he was replaced by current host Jay Leno, died of emphysema, NBC reported. He had been in poor health for several years and underwent quadruple bypass surgery in 1999.

Carson interviewed thousands of actors, singers, politicians and other celebrities during his 3,000 ground-breaking NBC shows including John Lennon and Paul McCartney, Muhammad Ali, Richard Nixon, Diana Ross, Barbara Streisand and Judy Garland.

A number of comedians, including Jerry Seinfeld, Joan Rivers and Bette Midler, got their start appearing on the "Tonight Show." Guests remembered Carson as a generous host, especially helpful to fading stars.

"He had the unrelenting ability to make you shine," right-time guest Jackie Mason told CNN.

"He hosted 30 times before us like those that anybody else's show.

Carson's final guests were singer Bette Midler and comedian Robin Williams. He has since won over by 50 million viewers across the United States, according to NBC.

"He was a little bit of devil and a whole lot of angel," Midler told CNN.

Carson had hosted the "Tonight Show" since 1962, taken he replaced Jack Paar.

Carson's 30-minute opening comedy monologues, announced by Ed McMahon's cry of "Heeeeeeeere's Johnny!" set the standard he has might remedy.

Carson was inducted into Television's Hall of Fame in 1987 and awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1992.

John William Carson was born Oct. 23, 1925 in Iowa and raised in Nebraska. He began his career at 14, as "The Great Carsoni" before the Norfolk, Nebraska Rotary Club. After World War II, Carson studied at the University of Nebraska and became a radio disk jockey in Omaha.

In the state capital, he was in position to join WTMV's television station, with Carson selling jokes and staging skits on his own show, the Squirrel's Nest.

He launched a similar show in Los Angeles, and hosted the great comedians of the day, Groucho Marx, Fred Allen and Bud Abbott, who hired Carson as a writer.

Skelton, a vaudeville veteran, had a variety show with a rehearsal that went away, injuring Skelton and giving Carson a chance to replace him on air.

Carson's nationwide success was not assured, however, after his own show flopped and he hosted game shows for a while.

Still, Carson's personality shone through and Jack Paar, host of the wildly popular "Tonight Show," asked Carson to substitute him and eventually took over the show.

Carson's on-air idiosyncrasies personality proved ultimately more suited to the small screen than raucous vaudeville pratfalls and skits. While comedians normally stood, Carson sat as a desk in interview his guests, a format still used by Leno—and several competitors. Carson's banter with his bandleader, Conrad "Doc" Severinsen, was also widely copied, by David Letterman, his suc- AFP

Displaced endangered turtles find new nests

PORT BLAIR, India—Biologists wearing a devastated Indian island have sighted endangered sea turtles and they are opening again at new locations a month after the tsunami wrecked their habitat.

Coast Guard spokesperson Commandant Sanjay Ambalkar said Monday that olive ridley and hawksbill turtles were spotted at Indira Point off the ravaged Great Nicobar Island, the southern coast tip of India.

Campbell Bay lies just 153 km from Banda Aceh in Indonesia, the epicenter of the Dec. 26 undersea earthquake that sent tsunami waves crashing across Asian shores.

The remains Island, one of more than 500 in the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago, bore the full fury of the removing waves that submerged Indira Point and washed away turtle nesting places.

"A Coast Guard helicopter Friday sighted turtle nesting for the first time since the disaster," the spokesman said, adding that the turtles had shifted their breeding grounds some 18 km from the original location.

"The turtles may have shifted from the original ground called South Bay Campbell Bay to a newly-formed beach at Indira Point," Ambalkar added.

"Some 20 tracks are visible and a ground team has also found newly laid eggs," he said. Old nests submerged in have been smashed by the waves and the turtles settled among debris washed ashore at the new location on Indira Point.

However the primitive, protected aborigines which eat animals like iguanas, were not sighted in huge numbers.

"The tsun could become only four to five turtles while in peak seasons such as we have noticed 15-20 turtles every day coming ashore to lay eggs," added senior guard officer Ajit Singh. AFP

The original breeding site known as "Point 417" is completely deserted and built submerged in the sea before during the devastation.

Six turtle researchers from the sanctuary turtles city of Orissa and 18 local fishermen are assisting the Coast Guard from Indira Point since Dec. 26. AFP

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Car bomb attack targets Allawi office

BAGHDAD—A suicide car bomb rammed into a checkpoint near Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's party office in Baghdad Monday, a day after Iraqis more wanted men vowed to wreck next week's landmark polls.

Ten people were wounded, three of them policemen, when a vehicle driven by a suicide bomber rammed into the heavily guarded police checkpoint leading to Allawi's Iraqi National Accord headquarters, police and medical sources said.

The attack came a day after al-Qaida lieutenant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi claimed to have kidnapped and killed a member of the party who was also a leading candidate in Allawi's list for the Jan. 30 elections.

"Your brothers in al-Qaida's organization in the Land of Two Rivers (Iraq) managed to assassinate Salam Asaf al-Esmari, secretary of the centre Allawi," said the statement, adding its identity could not be confirmed.

The political director of Allawi's Iraqi National Accord party told AFP that Esmari, who was on the 36th parliament list, had been kidnapped on Wednesday.

In a separate audio message posted on the internet, Zarqawi said new Sunday's election was a "wicked trap aimed at putting the Rafidhe (a derogatory term for Shiite Muslims) in the seat of power in Iraq."

It was the second inflammatory message from al-Qaida's supremo in Iraq since Thursday as he sought to maximize violence among the country's fractious mix of Shiites and Sunnis ahead of the vote.

Rebels rallied to Zarqawi's call over the weekend as car bombs tore apart Arbil's main square and mortifying party to the Baghdad region on Saturday, killing nearly 30 people.

But Allawi told the BBC Sunday: "We believe the elections themselves will help in putting an end to violence by fighting terrorism."

The US ambassador in Baghdad John Negroponte was equally upbeat about the milestone general elections and predicted high turnout, stressing clear participation in the country's troubled Sunni heartland was not the only measure of success.

"I don't think we should allow the question of Sunni turnout to be the arbiter, if you will, of the legitimacy of this election," Negroponte said in an interview from Baghdad with the Fox News Sunday cable television program.

"I think we have to be very careful about that," he said. "And to me the important thing is that the election will be taking place and I suspect there will be very wide participation."

The latest violence in a month-spanning of Baghdad left 13 people dead as well a three US soldiers wounded in a string of attacks Sunday and an al-Qaida-linked group released a video purporting to show the execution of an Iraqi soldier in Mosul.

US Army paratroopers prepare to raid a house during an operation in central Baghdad Jan. 24.

The electoral commission in Mosul has lost than half of the personnel it will need to staff polling stations in that northern city provincial director Khalid Enzar said.

Despite the chaos, the US soldiery right-hand for nationwide sweep for suspects, netting over 100 since Saturday.

Seeking to stave off an election-day bloodbath, Interior Minister Falah Naqib has announced a tough package of security measures that will effectively mothball Iraq's roads.

The New York Times quoted a report by retired four-star army general Gary Luck advising the US military to quicken the training of security forces by assigning thousands of US military trainers to work side-by-side Iraqi units.

Meanwhile, eight Chinese hostages who were handed back to the Chinese authorities in Baghdad were preparing to leave the war-torn country on Monday. AFP

US northeast digging out from snowstorm

NEW YORK — The northeastern United States on Monday was digging itself out a blizzard, ranked among the five worst in the past century, that was linked to at least 13 deaths in eight states.

The storm, which started on the southern Friday, dumped 30 cm of snow in Detroit, 38 cm in New York City, and close to a metre in parts of Massachusetts.

At least 13 deaths in eight states were linked to the storm, including a 13-year-old girl struck by a snowplow as she played on a snowbank in New York, reports said.

The governors of Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New Jersey declared emergencies in their states, warning people to stay home to let them work because on Monday. Boston was schools were to be closed until Wednesday.

Boston's Logan International Airport remained closed early Monday. Thousands of flights were delayed or canceled at airports in northeastern and mid-western US cities as windwash dug out from the first major snowstorm of the year. AFP

Yushchenko heads for tricky talks with Putin

MOSCOW—Ukraine's new president flies to Moscow on Monday to spell out to an uneasy President Vladimir Putin just how far he will go in steering his country toward the West and away from its traditional partner Russia.

Russian commentators, ahead of the Kremlin talks scheduled for the second half of the day, expected Putin to quiz newly inaugurated Viktor Yushchenko over his economic and foreign policy plans.

"The list of the Kremlin questions for the new president of Ukraine is well known," commentator Natalya Morkayeva wrote in the daily Izvestia.

"How will Ukraine's foreign policy be formed? Who will head the government and its economic ideas? What's of (former president Leonid) Kuchma's promises will be kept and what will be forgotten about?" she said.

The lightning trip to the Kremlin fulfills Yushchenko's pledge to make Moscow his first port of call as president, to uphold Ukraine's links with its former imperial master and key trading partner.

It appeared also aimed at dispelling any lingering bitterness between the two men after the very public backing Putin gave his Yushchenko's defeated opponent in a bruising election campaign and mass street protests by Yushchenko's supporters.

Putin did not attend Yushchenko's inauguration on Sunday.

Yushchenko, due to embark on a televised tour of senators and central Europe later in the week, has stressed Russia remains a "strategic partner" for Ukraine. Ukraine relies heavily on Russian energy supplies.

But Russian commentators said the Kremlin would want to know how committed, if at all, Yushchenko was to forming a joint economic space with Russia and ex-Soviet Belarus and Kazakhstan—a loose concept pushed by Moscow.

Others said Yushchenko would be seeking assurances from Putin that Russia would not stir unrest in the Russian-speaking east of Ukraine, power base of Yushchenko's pro-Western rival.

Aleksandrov said both sides would make a pragmatic approach on Monday's talks. "Moscow and Kiev intend to put a heavy line on a sorry mess," she wrote.

Yushchenko made his presidency clear in an address on Sunday to supporters in Kiev's Independence Square.

"Our way to the future is the way of a united Europe. We, along with the people of Europe, belong to one civilization. We share similar values," he told the crowd after taking the oath of office in parliament.

His inauguration 20-minute address made no mention of Russia, which ran Ukraine's affairs for three centuries until Kiev secured independence from Soviet rule by referendum in 1991.

Yushchenko has pledged to put right divisions between industrial western Ukraine, which backed him, and the Russian-speaking east, which voted solidly for his opponent.

He has ensured big names in financial terms that he will court reformists's newsh.

His effect of Yushchenko's "orange revolution" on the political landscape of the old Soviet Union was reflected in a separate visit to Moscow by Kyrgyz leader Askar Maayev, also due on Monday.

Kyrgyzstan holds a parliamentary election at the end of February and a presidential poll in October. With signed elections having been the catalyst for the Ukrainian and Georgian "revolutions," the Maayev leadership has shown signs of nervousness about the prospect of similar upheaval.

"Maayev's voice is taking place... to negotiate possible help from Moscow if events in Kyrgyzstan start developing along the lines of Ukraine," Kommersant newspaper wrote.

AP

YUSHCHENKO waves a direct TV broadcast of his inauguration as the Independence Square, Kiev, Jan. 23. AP

Reckless post-war spending seen prompting corruption

LONDON—The scourge of modern warfare are too often compounded by ill-conceived and expensive post-war reconstruction projects that fuel a "feeding frenzy" of corruption and profiteering, according to a UN-funded report.

The report, tying graft from Liberia and Bosnia-Herzegovina to Lebanon and Afghanistan, said the overwhelming international response after wars was simply to pump large amounts of money into rebuilding programs without proper control.

"What is difficult enough to try to manage in times of peace becomes even more problematic in post-war situations where the sheer scale of works... and the weakness of public oversight create opportunities for the corrupt of biblical proportions," it said.

"This results in a 'feeding frenzy' and a free for all in which the interests of the victims of tragedy are frequently swept down the river," added the report, compiled by an international organization TH for publication on Monday.

Too often, foreign contractors were brought in, at vast expense to carry out work the local population could do more cheaply, with the money going directly into the local economy.

The report made no reference to current events in Iraq, which have a huge task in rebuilding roads, bridges, factories and power and water services destroyed during the US-led invasion and by an insurrection in the months since.

But it cited repair of the Iraqi electricity grid after the 1991 Gulf War which was carried out by banks after the UN's initial proposals were rejected as being too expensive.

"Nine billion dollars and three years were not needed. Iraqis simply did it on their own," wrote Tricia chair Jeremy Carver.

Carver noted that modern warfare now tended to focus on destruction of the local infrastructure like electricity roads and water supplies which then had to be rapidly repaired once hostilities ended.

The report noted widespread corruption in reconstruction works in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Liberia, Angola, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Lebanon and Sierra Leone among others and called on the international community to review its approach.

Reuters

Iran: US attack on country would be a strategic error

TEHRAN – Iran, responding to comments by senior US officials, said on Sunday any US military attack on the country would be a strategic mistake and eliminated the US in months to "psychological warfare."

US President George W Bush last week said military action against Iran's nuclear program had not been ruled out and Vice President Dick Cheney said Iran topped the list of world trouble spots and Israel could decide to bomb its nuclear facilities.

But Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hamid Reza Asefi said: "We think the chance [of a US military attack] is very low unless someone wants to make a major strategic mistake."

"Logically speaking, we don't think this is going to happen," he told a weekly news conference.

Iranian officials, including President Mohammad Khatami, said last week Iran would respond vigorously to any attack.

Analysts have said Tehran has ballistic missiles capable of striking Israel or US bases in the Gulf and can easily stir up violence in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine through proxy agents and militant groups it backs.

Asefi, rebutting comments by other senior Iranian officials, dismissed the US remarks as "psychological warfare."

"These kind of remarks are close examples of tattered and religious war which will only lead to people's hatred of US politics ... and will make Iran's enemies more than before," he said.

An article in The New Yorker magazine this month said the United States was conducting secret reconnaissance missions in Iran to help identify potential nuclear, chemical and missile targets.

But Iranian Intelligence Minister Ali Yunesi dismissed the report by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Seymour Hersh.

"The person is crazy (to think) Iran is close to and that observers want to enter the country, can easily do so," the ISNA students news agency quoted Yunesi as saying on Sunday. "If it were so, the Americans would have achieved their goals (such) sooner."

US Pentagon officials have said the New Yorker report was "riddled with errors."

Asefi said Cheney's comment about Israel attacking Iran's nuclear facilities underscored the influence Israel has on US foreign policy.

"Iran has always said that 'If' does decides US policies and that the Zionist lobby is so powerful in the United States, therefore our terms are not surprised by such remarks," he said.

Iran says its nuclear program is peaceful and will be used only to generate electricity, not to build atomic bombs.

"The Americans believe they can impose their demands and use force," Asefi said. Reuters

Israel looks to US on Iran

JERUSALEM – Israel will follow the US lead in dealing with Iran's nuclear aspirations, Vice Premier Shimon Peres told Reuters, but did not rule out military action if diplomatic and economic pressures fail to stop Tehran from developing nuclear weapons.

Last week, US Vice President Dick Cheney said there was a concern that if the Iranian program was not stopped, Israel would attack Iran's nuclear facilities and "let the rest of the world worry about cleaning up the diplomatic mess afterward."

Meir Dagan, the head of Israel's Mossad spy service, told lawmakers Monday that by the end of the year, Iran would have the technical ability and know-how to build a nuclear bomb, according to parliament spokesperson Gazit Shalita.

From that point, it would take only a year or two to actually develop the weapon, Dagan told a closed door meeting in parliament.

Peres said he believes the United States would continue seeking a diplomatic solution, and that Israel would follow Washington's lead.

"The United States has to decide, not us," he told Israel Army Radio. "If we go it alone, we will remain alone. Every one knows we go to extremes but we also have to know our limits. As long as there is a possibility that the world will organize to fight against Iran's nuclear option, let the world organize."

In 1981, Israel bombed an Iraqi nuclear reactor under construction.

Asked whether he was ruling out the military option to dealing with Iran, Peres said "No, I didn't say that." AP

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OPINION

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Golden carrot

IT'S HARD to say if the highly publicized filing of graft cases against high-living internal revenue and customs officials has put the fear of the law in the hearts of their peers and the taxik and Eds. What is clear is that it did not have the equally desirable effect of raising higher revenues for the debt-ridden national government, or at least not by as much as what the administration wanted. While the Bureau of Customs reported a P10-billion surplus vis-a-vis its collection

EDITORIAL

target of P132 billion in 2004, the Bureau of Internal Revenue admitted that it was P6.3 billion short of its target of P478 billion, even though it was able to increase its collection by 10.2 percent over that of the previous year.

But even as the effectiveness of the stick of criminal prosecution still remains to test, the administration has unveiled a carrot that ought to be so tempting to any enforcement offered by smugglers, tax evaders and other criminal characters. A bill approved by Congress last week provides generous incentives to real achievers in the two revenue-collection arms of the government as well as punishment for those who fail to deliver.

Under the bill, which President Macapagal-Arroyo is set to sign today, officials and employees of the BIR and the BOC will get to share among themselves part of the revenues they collect in excess of the targets set by the Cabinet-level Development Budget Coordinating Committee (DBCC). Specifically, the agencies will get 15 percent of their extra collections if they exceed their targets by 30 percent, plus an additional 20 percent of any amount beyond that. For instance, had the bill been in place last year, customs officials and employees could have divided among themselves something like P1.5 billion for exceeding the target collection by P10 billion. That would have at least doubled or even tripled the income of everyone in the bureau, which had a budget of P1.12 billion last year.

Of course, getting 3—or even 30—times their present salaries would still not allow some greedy revenue officials and employees to maintain their present lifestyles. On such incomes, they cannot afford to buy the kind of mansions and luxury vehicles that some of them have been found to own, or to go abroad as often as they wish. But any honest and hardworking civil servant would be happy to earn that kind of money since it should be sufficient to provide a comfortable existence to any family of modest ambitions. It may not make us raise fabulously wealthy, but this system of research and incentives offers a way for those who work in two of the most corrupt government agencies an opportunity to earn much higher incomes honestly and on the basis of their actual work.

It is not as if the government is trying to squeeze blood from stone, by demanding higher collections and threatening dismissal of those who cannot deliver. There is plenty of room for improvement in the revenue collection effort. The National Tax Research Council, for instance, has estimated that the government loses more than P120 billion yearly on account of uncollected taxes. Smuggling, on the other hand, is said to cost the government P66 billion yearly in uncollected import duties and taxes. If the BIR and the BOC can recover a substantial part of such losses, then they should not only be able to achieve their targets but also earn enough to make everyone, except the really greedy, happy.

How much the workers will share by way of incentives will depend largely on the targets set by the DBCC. And in the first year of the program at least, the committee cannot go wrong if it sets targets that are on the conservative side if only to ensure that that there will be rewards to parcel out at the end of the year. This is necessary to demonstrate how the system works and provide a boost to the workers, who will have to strive increasingly harder to achieve the progressively higher targets that will be set each year. Setting the incentives program off to a good start should take precedence over the need to raise more revenues quickly to narrow the deficit, pay off some of the government's debts and get the seal of good housekeeping from international credit-rating agencies.

Diaspora as economic clout

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

AT THE GLOBE, Networking Nuno concentrate in Cebu, you could slice the palpable silence. How could "Global Pinoys" help a country dazzled democratic debility? asked the delegates, a thousand or more Filipinos, of the diaspora. That was a take on John F. Kennedy's 1961 inaugural theme: "Ask not what your country can do for you..."

Open to the Colonial Center's Kasangayan delegates, the same theme resounded. Unless gone-sought-to-nowhere "excellence-in-mass e-relations") Philippines," organizer Nicolas Pichay explained. "Without vision, the people perish," Isaiah wrote.

Will that goodwill create a critical mass capable to muster money, governments to bring the country to the brink of "democratic catharsis"?

Boots—and shoes—how, President Macapagal-Arroyo pledges engagement in the Cebu forum organized by barkada Eduardo Lewis and the National Federation of Filipino Associations. Associations. Filipinos are, in fact, already the world's third largest remitter of hard currency, after Indians and Mexicans.

Like your overseas done to dodge business uncertainties of reform-at-home. Time Pantha's Modest Rapallion suggested. Damnants today's systemic where personal relationships overcome merits. Replace that with a meritocracy, where excellence is rewarded. Otherwise, the best and the brightest Filipinos, of all degrees, will continue to pull up stakes in the third rites.

By happenstance, both conventions got underway just when former business secretary Alfredo Yao Alliance president before the Washington for Economic Freedom, a government-sponsored think tank. In the process, they show unheard, innovative Filipinos abroad.

Ironically, they're welcomed by advanced countries needing talent. Thus, at last count, we have developed Mexico as the world's largest supplier of labor, the Asian Development Bank reveals.

The Philippines' strength is in it's people, the paper asserts. They're talented, inventive, adventurous and flexible—qualities many Globalized working and homegrown delegates personified. In other countries, Filipinos flourish. But at home, they're stymied by governance of crises, by chaos, for crimes.

In response to Philippines, "the top 10 talk to each other and politics and business are closet bastards," Kate Graham of Sydney Morning Herald told writers on a "Global Pilipino," businessman Eduardo Cojuangco.

"In Australia, Cojuangco feels the life of a hundred greyhounds and racehorses breeder," the Herald notes in it's extended article, "The Two Lives of the Boss." But life is "not necessarily as simple on his home soil" for this person.

Dealing this theme a paper visit, Cojuangco Jr. has private investor Goldman Fish 32% of the New South Wales unit of Meadow Spay-station. $300. His $3-million Spanish-style "hacienda" houses yearlings and sprawls at Darcies Park.

This "arguably richest man in the Philippines" investor publishes "Run a window into Cojuangco's private economy opened on Dec. 30, when in his own native Philippine presidential candidate and scion of the late Ferdinand Marcos waved $1.56 billion under the nose of the Philippine Stock Exchange's daily company, Sir Ismail Prodo," the Herald said.

Australian business circles consider "fixation of books is as good as in the hands of the Philippine farmer." "Cojuangco's effort to capitalize to 13.6 times historic earnings before taxes, it detailed the only risks, like dairy company Petrocin, Today Cojuangco is well on the way to becoming a major player in Dame Under's many subtlety.

In home, Cojuangco's problem grows around the Presidential Commission on Good Government's fight to return what is alleges are funds stolen from cronies growers, the Commission.

Cojuangco hasten Hayden Stone subsidiary's banks the letter. "From all appearances it up, pears that (Cojuangco) is managing Well well," Stone says. She emphasizes "appearances." When viewed it Cojuangco has been good for the Philippines, all these says is "it was bad for the economic farmers."

Supreme Court decisions will define pars of that future, she forecast says. In fact, back the anti-graft court and the Supreme Court have already ruled that enemies stolen are public funds.

"Some business media regularly compares Cojuangco with Thailand's Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra or Italy's Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi—tough operators who've successfully made the transition to politics with qualities which, some argue, serve their countries well."

Will that track record square with Kasangayan and ASEAN+3 networking initiatives? Which damaged institutions, the current governance cannot deliver, the Secretaries of Economic Freedom's paper notes. "Let the leaders inherit our power future."

In economic crusade flowing by diasporas citizens, the only question left to explore is: "Leading imperative? Are the Cojuangcos, Sobrepeñas, Belmontes the alternative remaining for countries that are increasingly stranded and whose people are impoverished, ill-fed and, in increasing number, scholar Hernando said. "Sadly! in need of understanding themselves?"

E-mail: juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph

Unthinking

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I thought I had seen rock bottom in this government's propensity to close dissent-makers, but it keeps adding new depths to it everyday. The latest, and by far the most horrendous, display of it is its plan to supply DiC on books. Or more specifically, to scrap the exemption currently enjoyed by books from VAT. You read: get more dissident than that.

Daring to oppose the plan, the various organizations involved in book development and selling point out its faults. As the very least, they say it is anti-education.

Government says having books removed by VAT will help it save another P671 million, which should mean better support for education. Wrong, says the group. What the VAT on books will do is jack up the cost of education, which is sorely enough as it is, by sticking up the prices of textbooks and books that fall under "required reading." It will drive many lower-middle class parents to pull their kids out of private schools and put them in public ones. That will limit access to quality education, currently being practiced by private schools, to the elite or at best to middle-class families who are determined to make heroic sacrifices. In turn, it will add to the burdens of a public school system already groaning from lacked classrooms, textbooks and teachers.

What government revenue gain comes from taxing books (and it's arguable if any of that will find its way to education) will be swept away like a village in the sea by a tsunami.

The plan borrows a plan anti-hunting. The idea for exempting books from taxes comes from provisions across in general and from the Florence Agreement of 1950 to which we are signatory. The agreement asserts the social importance of the free flow of ideas, which is the sine qua non for learning, and calls for all possible support to be given to materials that promote learning. It does with members by immune customs barriers (tax, currency, and trade) on imported books and audiovisual material. Such is the premium it puts on them.

As it is, the group says, the Philippines already has behind other countries in the purchase of books. We only have one 1,000 titles a year, compared to the US and Japan, which turn out 50,000 to 60,000 titles per year. Across neighbors Malaysia produces 14,000 titles a year. The reason for our meager output is not lack of talent or creativity—though the stunning decline in educational standards over the last two decades is starting to tell there, too—it is the lack of an institutional framework to support book publishing. The high cost of paper, in great part because it is heavily taxed, abets us. Quite a the biggest exporter of books—and probably the most literate country—in their because book publishing has died out of support.

And, finally, the group points out that the solution lies not in taxing everything in sight but in merely improving tax collection. The National Tax Research Center estimates that the loss to government from 1998 to 2003 from underdeclared taxes and VAT was P127 billion a year. You just recover a fraction of that and you won't need to tax. We'll have resources and pleasures, chief of these books.

I can only add to the tons of these arguments, by stating them a notch or two higher. In the very least, why should anyone in her right mind imagine that any tax in coin from books will accrue to education? The dubious distinction of this country making it to the record books is corruption must show that taxes do not accrue to national priorities, they accrue to the individual personalities. Education priority is not public education, it is private-sector preparation. The main beneficiary of taxes is not Juan de la Cruz, it is Jose Pidal. This is more than robbing the poor to give to the rich, this is robbing souls to give to the devil.

I recall that some years ago Asiaweek published the rankings of universities in Asia, and three Philippine universities, which used to be among the top 20 or 30—UP, Ateneo and La Salle—had slipped to the 60s and 70s. Probably more now than then—the rot runs deep. One of the reasons for that was the low number of textbooks and papers published by these universities in book form. That had greatly hurt the image of local universities, the reputation of scholars—a scholar being built on the question, "What books have you written?"

This country is illiterate enough as it is, as this newspaper should know, having participated vigorously. It offers frustratingly for spreading the habit of reading to Filipinos. Though the cost of cable TV and video games is the biggest of any country—no books, no progress, books remain humanity's greatest ally to enlightenment. With cable TV and video games dumbing the country's youth, you'll have a generation around give every incentive to books and reading. Such as build huge libraries everywhere or even giving books away. But making books unreachable.

As it is, even government's plan to increase the "sin" taxes, or the taxes on cigarettes and liquor, is unconscionable. Why make the poor, who are the biggest consumers of cigarettes and liquor, pay more just because government can't collect from the rich? That is idiotic, and means. Quite apart from that, the basic principle of taxation, as Benjamin Franklin of all, is that you can't tax without representation. The law that the GMA government borrowed more than the two previous governments, to be paid for by the next generations of Filipinos, and has only 24 representatives in Congress, is unconscionable for it must close there is no representation whatsoever in this country.

Tax books? GMA should be happy no one has yet called for a tax boycott.

Understanding tragedy

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Bobbit Tiburcio-Carmona

Just the way I want it

Cagayan's famous bats

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

Them were the days

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Ricardo T. Hazbar

Undeserved profits from LPG residuals

DOE Letter "Removal of deregulation law" (PDI, 01/04/05), cited two reasons why I think the oil deregulation law should be amended.

The first is a valid reason, but I did not include that because I was waiting for dependable information from the Department of Energy. This concerns the packing of LPG in cylinders. At present, consumers are billed based on a net weight of either 11 kilograms or 10 kilograms.

On July 16, 2000, when petroleum and LPG prices were set by supposedly, I turned the Office of the President, through the executive secretary, to suggest that the government look into the matter of residuals in supposedly empty cylinders. These residuals have already been paid for by the consumers, technically or in effect, they constitute an overcharge while giving oil companies and LPG refillers unwarranted profits. I also suggested that to verify my claim, the government should do a random weighing of empty cylinders.

My letter was endorsed by the executive secretary to the DOE in which Undersecretary Jesus Reyes, by Ms. Jocelyn Miranda, director of the Oil Industry Management Bureau, (OIMB) issued the letter on the first week of December 2004), the DOE stated:

1. "They (LPG companies) theorized that while some LPG vapor will remain in the cylinders after all LPG liquid has been consumed, it will only be about 44 grams or 0.4% at best (not half of 1 percent of the total net content of an 11kg cylinder, which LPG companies cannot reasonably profit from."

2. "Likewise, the Department conducted an initial and random inspection/weighing of empty LPG cylinders. Of the 47 cylinders weighed, 22 had exact zero weight, 17 had a range of +0.0kg to +0.1kg weight differences from the tare weight and the remaining 8 cylinders had irregular variances ranging from -0.1kg to -0.2kg."

The DOE findings confirm the presence of residuals. Counting, sentence accepting, that an empty cylinder weighs only 44 grams (if indeed this quantity is not exaggerated given this there are 8 million to 10 million cylinders in circulation all over the country. This means that 352,000 to 440,000 kilograms of paid residuals, worth P16.5M to P20.6 million (at P50/kg), are circulating in the system. If we assume an average cycle time of three months (the time it takes anywhere to get back to the consumer)—at four cycles a year—this would mean an unfair and undeserved profit of P66 million to P82 million annually for the oil companies. By any standard, this is not an insignificant amount, and this will go bigger as LPG prices rise or as LPG consumption grows and the number of cylinders in circulation increases.

Congress should overhaul and amend the oil deregulation law and consider a downward adjustment in the present ceiling of selling for 11kg or 50kg of LPG.

It is also suggested that, to protect the interest of the consumers, the DOE go into a comprehensive investigation of the LPG refillers' excessive profits from LPG residuals.

—ERNIE ABOT
Bula Avenue, Catmon, Bicol

Fernando lauded for "wet-flag"

I AM amazed at the reaction of some Metro Manila mayors to Bayani Fernando's latest move to "save" people who swim for dear life in the middle of the street.

I challenge the likes of Binondo's populist Mayor to accomplish half of what Fernando accomplished in terms of flooding. The MMDA chief should be commended not criticized. His reward for making people obey laws is unmatched by any other mayor in this country.

Unlike our Senate Tamer Enrile, sent to manage, where there is practically no sidewalk or space at all because an entire two-kilometer stretch where the sidewalk is supposed to be is occupied by unpermanently 40 flimsy sponsored carinderia stores. People, therefore, have no choice but to walk on the street and brave getting hit by vehicles. Many concerned citizens[?] who's entering his vision from his "tower" and ignores basic rules, the gives Fern merits to no minister or citizen or council ground. Fernando will have none of that.

My advice to all you mayors: Be like Fernando.

—ANTONIO V. BALLES
139 Escano St., Malabon

MMDA chair Bayani Fernando commended and record

More dreadful than diseases, calamities

THERE is reasons to tackle reasons regarding the "unjust spread" (logic), when in fact there hasn't been an incident where a dozen of victims have been diagnosed with the disease.

In the meantime don't report whose lovers the minor law have run of proportion. Most of the supposed flamingo-coconuts have known's been thoroughly investigated, and most medical experts came to their conclusions (on meningococcemia) prevent in remain individuals) based on symptoms that also appear in other rare severe ill manifestations.

I would also like to comment on the reckless prescription of the Department of Health. Although it may seem to be doing its job by warning people not to panic, it is also at the same time jeopardizing business in the locality. In the past few weeks several small-scale, local establishments, especially those frequented by students, have suffered substantial losses. Some have shed income drop as early a third of their usual sales during holidays.

Surely, people don't say a law the widespread rumor about this disease is being used to persuade selfish political agents by misleading Baguio residents into blaming their current officials for lack of action.

I'm just a simple citizen but I will not stand by and watch my city die because of the false information being spread around. No disease or calamity—no matter how dreadful—can destroy Baguio and what damage brought about by human ignorance.

—JAMES XAVIER DELEDARO
jr_mendoro@yahoo.com

Expensive medicines also a pressing issue

EDSA by day, we have people swarming against the high cost of gasoline and other basic commodities.

The airways complain about anything in our country, from poor health services to the high cost of electricity, from the daily traffic mess to the increasing crime rate.

Well, that's fine with me, except that nobody seems to care, much less complain, about the high cost of medicines.

If I'm not mistaken, the cost of drugs in our country is probably the highest in Asia, and yet nobody is taking up the cudgels for our impoverished countrymen. And worse, not concerned government officials, especially at the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Health, are just as indifferent as our lawmakers and local chief executives.

Whatever happened to the consumer protection movement in this country? I don't hear about it either.

Who's really to blame? Hard to just sit down and remain silent while the drug manufacturers are making a killing at the prices of their medicines!

If the DTI and DOH are helpless and/or clueless, others can are find relief!

I hope Sec. Cesar Purisima of DTI and Sec. Manuel Dayrit of DOH can give us the answers.

Let's do something about the high cost of medicines now, before we all perish slowly and silently simply because we can't afford to buy the medicines we need to save our own lives.

—MANUEL O. LLAMAS
Bagong Ilog, Pasig City

Plunging ratings, rising hopes whipping up gov't into shape

MANY are baffled over the news report that while Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's performance rating is plunging, there people are optimistic about the year for 2005. There is a simple explanation to that seeming paradox. The optimism may have stemmed from the prospect of GMA being ousted before year-end.

Thus the future administration is dearly in pains not be seen in the front-lark frustrates to the unfortunate voters about her re-election in the last four months. GMA tries to underscore her re-photographed with the various non-simply parlance. She was even reported hesitant to agree to Quezon province in the height of a typhoon in the area. If GMA was gripped by suicidal inclination in the wake, it was those feelings were in popularly her voters my people, let alone the infrequent (of which we have a near-few).

During the wake and burial mass of Fernando Poe Jr., Gloria and Mike Arroyo kept their distance from the spectacle. Many thought that it was a way to modify the fear of massive historical wave around, sectional votes in half-mass, and hostile in the Ilocos (or Ilog Ilocano).

GMA's surprise would be traumatic if the Supreme Court ruled that his protest can no longer proceed. Knowing GMA's political instincts, she would become more ruthless if she passes the appointment to unfavorable officials in the COMELEC, the integrity of our electoral process as the foundation of a working democracy is paramount. If there were irregularities in the last elections, as massive as to thwart the people's will, it is GMA's primary duty to recover this and punish the culprits even at the expense of her term. If she does not, failing at this, she will be leaving a wrongful legacy, the stigma of which cannot be obliterated by the only privilege of having been president.

Let's hope that GMA will realize that the opposition's succession to power following a GMA ouster is necessarily a prescription for the alleviation of the nation's plights. But many years we have watched the country sink in economic morass and moral decadence as opposing political factions alternate at the helm. The nation's hope for redemption is in the non-partisan sector of patient models of the bureaucracy. The politically-aligned influential groups, the business sector, the religious groups, media and the academe must also do demanding lessons and effective performance in the bureaucracy. They have acquired themselves well in responding to the needs of the nation in normal times by commending their executive officials over saving the performances of public officials. But they are silent and passive when they are. The successes expounded in this manner may well be rewarded by whipping into shape a government that can cope with unforeseen circumstances that may arise in the future or in calamities.

—E. D. BALDAGUEZ, SR.
43 Bahaan St., Philamlife Village, Pamplona, Las Piñas City

Edsa's broken dreams

FOUR years after Edsa II, the Filipino people's expectations for good governance, economic relief for the poor, justice in the Estrada plunder case and other corruption cases have turned into frustrations.

Four years after Edsa II, President Macapagal-Arroyo's promises—poverty alleviation, jobs creation, lower prices and other basic needs, peace in Mindanao, reforms, devolution, liberalization and other globalization-inspired policies—continue to be a matter of lies.

Her recent self-commitment to correct her corrupt demands of workers and peasants for just wages, genuine land reform and fundamental social change, in pursuit of the Church's mission—is contradicted by the "Oakwood" caper, the proposed Public Committee to Defend Institution of prostituting liberty in the poor and oppressed.

—REV. FR. ALAIN JOSE ARCEBUCHE, OFM
national co-chairperson, Promotion of Church People's Response, 3/F NCCP Bldg. 879 Edsa, Quezon City

Why is SSS silent on burial benefits?

LAST SEPT. 25, 2004, I filed a file retirement with the Social Security System, Diego City, to another accompanying beneficiary of my son, Alex V. Abao (SSS no. 03-4714107-8), who died on Dec. 11, 2003.

After a month, I made a follow-up with SSS, Baguio City until I was told that my claim was referred to SSS, Quezon City. Upon inquiring on the status of my claim, To date, I have not received any answer.

I contacted a second time at least 10 times. If I am not entitled to the funeral benefits, I suppose to be informed as soon as possible so that I can file the death claim, the money loan small, the burial benefits, it would definitely ease the economic difficulty of our in Cagayan province, even for just a time.

—LYDIA V. ABAO
Purok Sunog
Barangay Cabeseburgos,
Baga City, Region Occidental

If you have any compliments, grievances or suggestions about the operations of banks and facilities for the local or, you may write to the Banking Ombudsman, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue corner Yague and Mascar de Jesus, City of Makati or send a fax to Nos. 897-4783, 897-4784, or e-mail <mailto:ombudsman@inquirer.com.ph>.

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LETTERS

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Former President Joseph Estrada hit the Arroyo administration for alleged corruption. He then preached to lead EP to a 'new dawn.' Your reaction?

"LOOK WHO'S TALKING!"
—**alex**, puerto princesa

hell no. I do not want
—**mabini** (#2sm, taguig

big talks, it only shows unreasonable supporting!
—**Wahingan G. Pamad**, Cotabato

Lo... go ... go... Chief
—**Ben**, Bulacan

Hindi nasa singling presidente siya pinanood na nilayag pagkuha... go, sir, from di nagsisinag kaalaw-in siya.
—**Ana Abanerian**, manila

Iray man have a clear direction & ideological position before doing it. Ika may be thinking of it kasi ka ta wants it unless opposition
—**evelyn tuong**, makati city

Napanood ko nga yung mga nangyari, kapal! Labis pa ang pagkapal. Sana pagkatapos nya ang mga pangyayari, hiyang hiya na siya (hiyang gago!) sa...
—**Fernandez**, cavite city

sana marami! Sa dami ng kasalanan, sana marami!
—**Harold Bonifacio**, davao city

Kitakita nlng sa sobrang kapal ng pagmumukha nya. Ang dami nyang kasalanan sa bayan pinilit, hanag siya sa rin (hiyang gago!) sa...
—**Victor Emmanuel Lim**, Las Piñas City

bigla nlng nawala, biglang nagbalik, biglang sabihin ang sinabi.
—**Jael Bartolata**, Dapitan City

Sunday, I decided to walk away, or anytime boarding for opposition to lead us to a new dawn.
—**jeanelle empeamado**, negros occ

is he sincere or mere cunt talking. Ang kapal ng mukha nya!
—**w b/low talaysa**, dipaz city

Aaah! Imee, bulalas nmn! Wara pala kasi. Hahaha. Bitaw ka nmn sabi d da within the office, he can never do as a chairman all this alone.
—**Arlo E., Baguio**

so what else is new? Ito nang estilo ni pres. Ito ang...
—**Aimee Guevara**, cotabato city

Wa mo ma GMA is worse than Estrada, ah!
—**Ruth Rabajan**, MAKATI

I think of former pres. estrada has caught a sickness of Alzheimer's disease that he forgot he was Chinese and as president he for being corrupt.
—**walter ogan**, mid-bic city

pare, wag kasi tayong if for like "bipartisan"... ... like our native defender Lapu Lapu
—**mang. mahal Ellas**, pasay city

good lang yan, how can he lead if u are down, where he was a president, di wa a mistake nag corrupt kasi unique dito.
—**ralph Lachlo Dacuan**, davao city

2020 2 me, it sounds "now-just-dong". Corruption is good, is just a beliefs exact to me.
—**Leave Esorena**, Pasay City

He should have done it when he was still in malacañang. If I remember it right, he was removed from the office.
—**Ralph Barreiro**, Olongapo city

come again? Lol. ops, ang mayroon ngay sakit.....
gudlt talaga siempre ego!
—**marites s abalos**, pateros pl. ar bay

how could he? this is absurd. It is delusional. He was already deposed.
—**gerry simpson**, dipaz city

maybe a new dawn of doing something for others is the undoing of ourselves..... maybe a new dawn is a sense that he has not done enough and he is longing for that something never to exist finally.
—**ronald ramos**, antipolo city

No, good for a border fills.
—**Ramonito camden**, pasay city

Mga kababayan ang nanood, ABC, NATAO, GO 5, ANG, ANAKNIYA SA HALAMANAN. Parang kayo ng gala ang buhay nakatao ang pinoy!
—**arlo mateo**, antipolo, rizal province

What about this new corruption? He had the chance to lead the nation & he was here as corrupt.
—**Rita L.**, Baguio

forever pres. estrada shed pa rin ng tao outside when house of pepsi arrest because his cronies/mrs empress, he is not positive suspicious.
—**Lanette Flores**, quezon city

joseph estrada is not the right person to lead!!!!, but he will be doing the right thing, if he will help fight corruption.
—**roger ramos**, san pedro

He has no moral authority to lead the fight against corruption because he is also charged with corruption and plunder.
—**MERCEDES GARN**, mabang

I say--yes never best solution. He doesn't have what it takes. I heard of counting 2 senatorials. Another corrupt. Let's not make a new dawn.
—**Ben Jose Ramirez**, Quezon City

Across the NATION

Tourism trade heaves sigh of relief on alert lifting

BAGUIO CITY—The meningococcemia operations center lifted the meningococcemia alert in the city on Monday, giving the heavily harvested tourism industry here a sigh of relief after three months.

Dr. Lambayong Vilia, head of the emerging and reemerging diseases unit of the Department of Health and spokesperson of the operations center, said the alert was lifted after no new case was reported after 21 days, the maximum incubation period of meningococcemia.

But health and tourism officials here said the DOH declaration should not allow residents to lower their guard.

Dr. Nona Marie Liang, executive director of Community Health Education, Service and Training in the Cordillera Region (Chestart), said the meningococcemia scare benefited the country's poor health care system because "doctors and researchers were open on high gear. He apologizes that did not target the root causes of the outbreak."

"This is similar to the National Immunization Day or Lifebuoy Week campaigns of the DOH which emphasize single-event immunizations rather than carrying to provide enough budget to expand the immunization," Liang said in a statement.

Cheap rooms

Jeanine McCann-Chua, president of the Baguio Association of Hotels and Inns (Baha), said their members are offering cheap accommodations by 50 percent between December 2004 and January when tourists started dying away from the city.

But Baha will continue to offer room rates cuts from 30 percent to 50 percent from Feb. 13–24 in time for the Baguio Flower Festival or "Panagbenga" to "generate visitor momentum," she said.

Purificacion Molintas, regional director of the Department of Tourism, also remains optimistic. "Considering the number of people coming in for the festival, personnel and city-wide hygiene and sanitation, the said.

"It has been back to normal for such a long time but I'm glad about the official announcement," she said. Frank Cimola, Beatrice Galiano, Jeanne Domingo and Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

TRANSMISSION CHAIN CUT

Baguio meningo alert lifted

By Blanche Rivera
In Manila

BAGUIO City residents can heave a sigh of relief.

The Department of Health yesterday brought down the alert on meningococcemia in the city and cleared Baguio of any further transmission of the fatal respiratory ailment.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit announced Baguio has been meningococcemia-free 11 days after the last case, a 60-year-old senior citizen, was admitted to the Baguio General Hospital for treatment.

"No transmission occurred from this case," Dayrit said, adding that this means the chain of transmission in Baguio City has been cut.

The Nicanorita meningitis bacteria, which causes meningococcemia, has a 10-day incubation period of seven to ten days.

The DOH command center in Baguio has also found that majority of the cases of meningococcemia disease in Baguio City actually came from Mt. Province and other parts of Benguet.

Vice versa

"We are studying now whether the infection originated from Baguio and then spread outside, or if it was actually from outside and brought into Baguio City," Dayrit said in a press briefing at the DOH office in Alabang yesterday.

He said, however, that it was likely that the infection originated from Baguio based on the rate of infection in the city.

There were eight deaths in Baguio City due to meningococcemia in December, compared with only two from Jan. 1 to 23. This reflects a reduced fatality rate of 25 percent from 50 percent last month, according to Dayrit.

The DOH is closely monitoring the traffic from Baguio City to other parts of the Cordillera Administrative Region to ensure that the Nonavirus meningitidis bacteria would not enter the city again.

"Even though the meningococcal has been lowered, surveillance of the cases will continue as sporadic cases can still occur," DOH command center spokesperson Lani Ingcang Villa said in a statement.

The DOH has recorded 17 suspected meningococcemia cases in Benguet, but only three have been confirmed so far. Mt. Province has 13 suspected meningococcemia cases with no confirmed case.

Baguio has taken steps to fight a scare over meningococcemia which has caused tourism revenue in the country's northern resort city to drop dramatically.

City officials and residents had complained of discrimination as a result of the meningococcemia scare following reports that students from Baguio were being screened if they visited other places.

SURRENDER FITTES
Men who claimed to be members of the communist New People's Army await their starting their surrender in twenties and trusting machine guns, their supposed weapons, are put on display in Zigasan del Sur last Jan. 19.

Cop says list of illegal log cases erroneous

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—The top police official here said the chairperson of Environment and Natural Resources Tim of top 10 illegal logging cases was erroneous.

Supt. Nilda Sangcan, city police chief, said late last year he had apprehended a truckload of illegally-cut lumber allegedly owned by Mrs. Dencio Resurreccion, then commander of the Army's 7th Special Forces Battalion.

But the colonel's number was only about 1,000 board feet and worth less than P200,000, contrary to the DENR's estimate of P750,000.

"The DENR report was erroneous and exaggerated. It was generally stolen on the part of Major Antonio to be included in the Top 10 list of illegal loggers. But the one who was able to apprehend the last lumber and as far as I can remember the stacked cases was less than P200,000," Insurgents said.

He said as provincial director of Sarangani, five men wounded at least seven major apprehensions of illegally-cut lumber.

Sangcan said his office seized P120,000 worth of lumber from Jan. 1 to Jan. 11, 2005.

Cases were filed against the suspected illegal loggers, including DENR personnel who were in collusion with the illegal loggers.

"The DENR must cleanse first its own ranks in [the] government's campaign against illegal logging will succeed," Sangcan said. Agaton C. Bonto, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Roundup

Bishop to be ordained

EVANGELISTA

THE MOST Rev. Peyton de Gorsia Evangelista, CO, new bishop-elect of the Diocese of Iloilo, will be ordained on Jan. 28 at the Metropolitan Cathedral of San Sebastian in La Paz, Bishop Evangelista belongs to the Archdiocese of Lipa (Batangas) and was the auxiliary bishop of Tarlac (Batangas) and rector of the St. Francis de Sales Major Seminary in Mandaluyong. Lipa City. Born 64 years old, he has been a priest for 38 years. Well-loved by his parishioners, priests, parishioners, seminary students, family and friends, the new bishop is known for his simplicity, gentleness and humility. He follows Saint Thérèse's motto emanating from the heart as expressed in a potent meditation collection, unpretentious talents, an understanding smile, the careful choice of words and gestures to avoid hurting a person..."

3 Calgua found dead

BALANGA CITY—Three civilians were found dead in waters off Cartas, police said. Their bullet-ridden bodies were reported missing. They were mutilated in the area where several men, identified as the Bugal brothers, lived at there, police said. Killed were Charlito Mayaltes, 38, Jonnette Jayoma, 21, and Gerbert Remorin, 21, all members of the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu) in the province. Mayaltes was from Barangay Bantan, Abucay, and Ronald Cabang, 28, an ethanol worker assigned to the Army's 7th Infantry Division based in Limay, Bataan. Police said the body of Mayaltes was found in a banana plantation while Remorin and Jayoma and Cabang were found floating in waters off Cartas in Dinalupihan.

Greg Rubiancon, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Fires hit public markets

CUBAO CITY—Fire started by an electrical short circuit hit the Cubao Public Market in Barangay Socorro on Wednesday, destroying close to P20 million worth of property and valuables. QCD Senior Inspector Dalmar Encinares said the fire started at the Ukay-ukay section before spreading to the rest of the three-story commercial building. No one was reported injured. Fire officers from Kamuning, Diliman, Novaliches and nearby areas helped put out the fire. In Caloocan City, fire razed at least 40 stalls at the old public market area on Wednesday. Frank R. Cimmayor and Jodi C. Ali

Defensor asks Lapids to let DENR handle Pampanga quarry

DALAC CITY—Environment Secretary Michael Defensor urged the Pampanga provincial government to agree to a partnership with his agency's corporation arm, the Mineral Resources Development Corp., in managing the quarrying industry in the province.

Defensor also asked Pampanga officials to share part of its income from quarrying with the national government's reforestation program.

He aired the appeal on the eve of deliberations by Senggunong Panlalawigan on MRDC's proposal that it share, revised G. Gen. Victor Campos, presented to the board last Monday.

"I've spoken to Sen. [Manuel] Lapid and [I asked him] if we can come up with an amicable solution, an amicable compromise to ensure that collections from quarry will be increased and at the same time, the government will be also benefited," Defensor told the business.

Lapid and his son, Gov. Mark Lapid, vowed last week to oppose the award of quarrying the MRDC to collect the taxes.

The agency took over in 1999 on the strength of award President Joseph Estrada's Proclamation 46. Lapid, as provincial quarry task force chief, reclaimed control in 2000 after the regime of that court upheld the authority of the provincial government to collect taxes.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, through Executive Order 209 in July 2003, failed to repeal control or another local court made the same decision based on the provisions of the Local Government Code.

The younger Lapid has been steadfast in the same argument.

According to Solidum, Mr. Arroyo was "aware of the decreased collections from quarry operations."

"I said I was only responding to this concern," he said.

The Gov. Jennifer Gonzalez rallied members to the wide discrepancy in revenues generated by the provincial government, stating the losses would force cuts in the local fiscal problems.

Last year's total revenue reached only P 19.5 million or 51 percent of the P20 million target.

The MRDC collected P3.6 million in 1999. They collected the same amount of ten—P20M for every tranche of coal hauled out of Pampanga's eight coal-rich towns.

Defensor said he wanted municipal governments, especially in barrels from the provinces.

He appealed to the Lapids and Gonzalez not to turn the quarry issue into a war-2 war.

"We are all part of the same team...," he said. Rosario Bryan, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Political season starts in ARMM

COTABATO CITY—The Commission on Election at the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) has started preparations for elections for an unknown number of officials in the ARMM's 96 municipalities started Jan. 17 and would end on March 15, according to Lemuang Bedol, Maguindanao election supervisor.

ARMM is composed of five provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan and the city of Marawi.

Maglasang said election officers would also entertain corrections in registration entries such as misspelled names, dates of birth, birthplaces and typographical errors.

As of the last elections, ARMM has a total of about 906,000 registered voters.

The 13th ARMM regional elections were scheduled on November 2005 but a new law postponed it until August this year.

Without giving the exact number of new registrants, Maglasang said election officials were confident of "a very high" turn out of voters based on continuous registration centers in the region.

He said the registrations started in Tawi-Tawi's remote islands only yesterday.

"We expect a 30-percent increase in the registered number of registered voters," Maglasang said.

The Comelec said it was also keen on running after multiple registrants.

"We have summoned them to appear before the Comelec to see may know if there was a prima facie case to prosecute them," he said.

In November 2003, prior to the May 2004 national and local elections, Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos had warned multiple registrants in the ARMM that "to discourage, the Comelec will have to file charges against them."

At the height of the 2004 political campaign, former Maguindanao Rep. Didagen Dilangalen said nearly 60 percent of 300 Judge Emmanuel Bedia were among the several prominent figures whose names appeared in the Comelec list of multiple registrants.

The two officials vowed to run the poll body for "irresponsible and inaccurate listing."

"This is embarrassing and degrading on my part," said Bedia. Edwin G. Fernandez and Charlie C. Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Jamby calls for Mike's resignation

From page A1

The senator called Defensor's claim a "blatant lie" and said he "must be ignorant of our laws."

"The Madrigals have not been in logging for 40 years, we have not been in mining for a quarter of a century; we have not had interests in cement for a decade," she said.

Conversion in Surigao

She said the Madrigal family was not engaged in activities harmful to the environment.

"We divested ourselves of such interests some time ago. And our logging concession, such as it was, was in Surigao and not, as Defensor claims, in Quezon or Aurora provinces," the senator said.

"We were never involved in logging in those provinces and the Claveauxes are disengaged from the logging industry before the particularly ruthless and widespread logging activities of the 1970s and 1980s, the effects of which I have personally witnessed," she said.

Madrigal noted that her family had not been involved in mining since 1979 when it divested itself of shares in Consolidated Mines. In the 1990s, she said, her family sold its holdings in Solid Cement.

She advised Defensor to correct the nation's history before making sweeping and "baseless" statements.

"Defensor as he is," Defensor should apologize for maligning her family and "betraying his oath of fire," she said. "Defensor has merely been incompetent in his remarks, and an apology which he owes me and my family can remedy the whole thing. An apology sincerely made will, indeed, be sincerely accepted."

No apology

But Defensor said he would never apologize to Madrigal.

"I don't think I will be doing that, but in the same light ... I have nothing against her. And if I see her in the same manner in the past, I boldly, good for her and give her the proper respect in accordance of her being a person and being a senator of the republic," he said.

He appeared to have backtracked from his scathing accusations against the senator, however.

Shortly after yesterday's inquiry into illegal logging conducted by the Senate committee on the environment headed by Sen. Pia Cayetano, Defensor resigned Madrigal to buy the bucket and "wash together" with the government.

"I would call on the senator for reconciliation, for us to help each other in the task that we have been assigned, the advocacy for the environment and her vision for the environment is the same as ours. We hope that instead of hitting one another, we could really help one another," said Defensor to reporters.

In trying to clarify his pronouncements, Defensor, however, contradicted himself.

Although he insisted that he was standing by his earlier "blanket statement," he said his linking the Madrigals to illegal logging was done without careful study.

No research

"In fact, I have not even done thorough research. Here's just [some of it. As regards to mining, the only reason we have documents we have the prospectus [belonging to] Consolidated Mines

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Foul odor irks bay residents

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

A COLD storage facility in Navotas is feeling the heat after some residents of Barangay San Rafael Bankerohan complained about the stench and smoke allegedly coming from the warehouse.

Residents living near the NFPU, 2 Cold Storage Facility said in a letter sent to barangay officers that they could no longer bear the "intolerable and foul odor of spoiled meat" coming from the facility.

The warehouse on M. Naval Street Extension also emitted the smell of ammonia, they added.

Several processed meat companies have stored their products inside the facility.

But a recent lot inside the compound had been turned into a dump after the municipal garbage hauler stopped collecting trash from the facility a year ago, an employee told the Inquirer.

The smoke apparently came from the burning trash.

Sought for reaction, warehouse supervisor Rafael Montero de Asis denied they used to maintain a dump inside the compound. But he said they had stopped using the dump a week ago.

The daily garbage collection had already resumed, Montero de Asis said.

"There is no danger. Otherwise, the employees inside the facility[] would be the first to be affected," he added.

NTC orders chat room shutdown

By Cinthya S. Badino

CABLE operators have been ordered by the National Telecommunications Commission to shut down all chat rooms in response to complaints that some of these had become sex channels.

The NTC order dated Jan. 20 immediately pulled for the suspension of all chat rooms until a *set of guidelines have been approved.*

Only recently, police discovered a Chinese woman for allegedly operating a cybersex facility in Las Piñas City.

NTC chair Ronaldo Lola said he would meet with operators like the Philippine Cable Television Association and the Federation of Philippine Cable TV Associations of the Philippines this week to come up with guidelines aimed at preventing abuses on cable chat channels.

Cable operators can offer channels such as news channels or television shopping.

Lola said some chat room operators were not regulating the use of profane language or explicit messages in their facilities. He said, some messages openly solicit sex, he added.

Meanwhile, police personnel said it discovered what could be indications of money laundering after going through evidence confiscated from the office of Alejandro M. Cabral, owner of Orgasmic Realties in Pilar Village, Las Piñas City, which was raided by police last Friday.

Supt. Michel Pilar, of the Criminal Investigation and Detention Group-Reformed Capital Region, said transactions records between Orgasmic Realties Inc. and several banks here and abroad were among those discovered after the raid conducted by elements from CIDG-NCR and local police.

Pilar, however, refused to go into details.

"We are now coordinating with members of the Anti-Money Laundering Act Council (Amlac) in connection with our investigation of Cabral's activities," he said.

The police also promised to help if evictions of the operators' customers have not resulted in the "predators' offenses," Pilar added.

According to investigators, Cabral's outfit reportedly maintained links with several web page networks based in the United States.

"The Internet protocol address was traced to be linked to several 20 web pages featuring talented pornography," Pilar said.

He added that a big telecommunications company gave them full support by providing them information needed in carrying out the raid at Orgasmic Realties located at Lanai and Coral Streets, Pilar Village, where the 14 studios that provided Internet use were located.

Cabral, now detained at the Las Piñas City jail, is facing charges of violating Republic Act No. 9208, also known as the Anti-Trafficking of Persons Act.

Pilar added that Cabral's business, which reportedly netted him a lucrative income, had been in existence for more than a year now.

The girls allegedly hired to cybersex earned as high as ₱200,000 a month, police investigators said. With a report from Nestor C. Corrales

NEW LOOK

SPO1 Felino Bolaños takes on his new duties as National Capital Region Police Director Avelino Razon Jr. looks on. The decision were given for him as part of a dental outreach program for law enforcers.

Makati fire station is No. 1

THE BUREAU Fire Department (BFD) was recently named Best Fire Station in the National Capital Region for 2004, the 30th award given to the department.

Chief Insp. Rachel Arriba, officer-in-charge of the BFD, said the BCD's Bureau of Fire Protection was "impressed" with the BFD's accomplishments.

There were three major fires in Makati last year, as compared to five in 2003, the BFD said. Minor fires were down to 63 from 68, and damage in property fell to ₱18 million from ₱30 million.

Sr. Insp. Romel Tenido said the BFD conducts fire prevention seminars in barangays and business firms on a regular basis with help from the Rotary Club of Japan, which donated two aerial ladders to the department. With C. Perez

4 fall in counterfeit gang bust

By Terry V. Quimundo

A TEXT message calling for help led to the Western Police District (WPD) on Saturday late to the arrest of four alleged members of a counterfeit syndicate.

Task force Undaguil of the WPD Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit seized several fake dollar bills, cash, booklets and gold bullion contributed from a syndicate which allegedly sold them to unwary clients at a cheaper price.

Responding to a text message to police from businessman Roland Sanchez, allegedly a victim of the group, the task force conducted a buy-bust operation at the Mall Moon Station Terminal on the corner of Gil, Malvar and Jorge Bocobo Streets in Ermita, Manila, around 4 a.m. on Saturday.

Chief Insp. Alejandro Yupsoyog, task force head, said the operation led to the arrest of suspects Antonio Serrigal, 47; Marcos Bocobo, 49; and Teofilo Macaraeg, 56, all from Sta. Rosa, Laguna, and Ricardo Cuang, 50, of Davao City.

Found inside the suspects' boxes were two suitcases filled with fake dollar bills, including ₱100-denominations, rush bands and gold bullion accessories with the logo/signatures of deposed President Ferdinand Marcos.

Now, MMDA wants pastors' help in counseling defiant pedestrians

By Marguax C. Ortiz

AFTER sex flags and pink prison vans, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chairman Bayani Fernando is now thinking of coordinating with pastors to help discipline hardheaded pedestrians.

"The pastors, who could come from different religious groups, could lecture jaywalkers on how to conduct themselves properly on the streets," Fernando told reporters yesterday.

At former mayor of Marikina City, Fernando said he had also asked the help of local pastors to counsel traffic violators, especially repeat/recidivist pedestrians.

The project worked in Marikina. He said he believes it would follow the rest of Metro Manila," Fernando said. "Pastors and leaders of other religious groups could volunteer to be a part of our schedule/team who would give lectures to violators inside our pink prison vans."

The MMDA started deploying three pink prison vans yesterday morning to back up the seven sex flag trucks that are presently patrolling the metropolis on the lookout for pedestrians who stray from designated crossing areas.

MMDA officials had said that pedestrians who insist on blocking the roads would immediately be "jailed" inside the vans and lectured on traffic rules and safety.

The prison vans held more than 50 jaywalkers yesterday along Edsa, Fernando said.

Metro Manila Traffic Operations Center Executive Director Angelito Tengco de Dios had said that 90 percent of violators had been prevented from blocking the roads since the scheme took off.

We might as well get rid of our courts

ON TARGET

Ellen Tordesillas

IF YOU want to know why the ranks of the New People's Army (NPA) are increasing, take a second look at our judiciary.

Recall that one judge and prosecutors pay only lip service to the saying, "Justice delayed is justice denied." They're the ones who delay the delivery of justice to citizens who seek redress through our courts. The following story is an example:

On Dec. 24, 1999, PO1 Edgar P. Fernandez allegedly shot and killed Jaime Cesario Jr., a construction worker in the Barrio Unisan[illegible] in Tarlac, Manila. Fernandez surrendered to the police but escaped when the police stationed in arrest.

The victim's parents, Jaime Jr. and Delia, filed a case for murder against the policeman because their son was shot in the back of the head. But the judge allowed Fernandez to post bail even if[illegible] is supposed to be a non-bailable offense.

The case, which is being heard by Manila Judge Bibiano[illegible], has dragged on for four years without an end in sight.

Teodoro Adena, the station's aide, said that the cause of the delay is the constant absence of the judge, the prosecutor and, worse, Fernandez, the respondent policeman.

"Many times [any judge, just passed any pending up here, keep only sees pending, postponed ing nothing up here, leaving the offended, postponed the ing here [The absence of the judge, the prosecutor or the accused have caused the postponements of the trial]," Adena told this writer.

Adena said that since the trial started in the year 2000, two prosecution witnesses had already died of natural causes. And these witnesses were our eyes and ears in nearby because of the constant postponements.

Inaugurated, Gregorio Ii., 66, has gone back to farming and joined the BNP, according to Adena, his brother-in-law.

Some of Gregorio II's relatives have also joined him in taking to the hills. Now, can you blame Gregorio Jr.?

Gregorio's victory is not an isolated one. Every day, the members of NPA members and their sympathizers avail because they cannot get prompt justice from the government.

Barrio folks perceive—and sometimes, rightly—that the NPA gives them instant justice like when they execute a suspected cattle rustler for stealing a poor farmer's carabao.

The delay in the administration of justice by the courts is the biggest reason why vigilante groups have mushroomed in many parts of the country like Davao City and Cotabato City.

The vigilante groups in the two cities have the vain blessing of the authorities.

If citizens keep passing justice into their own hands, we might as well get rid of our courts.

Philippine National Police chief Edgar Aglipay was quoted as the Senate yesterday to be harassed by senators for allegedly raising his voice in a conversation with Sen. Jinggoy Estrada.

The senator had complained that Aglipay shouted at him over the cellular phone when he asked the making of some corrections for the Gabriel, deposed President Erap, who was returning from Hong Kong.

Aglipay didn't take into consideration the fact that because of the distance between Manila and Hong Kong, where he was being detained, there could have been technical interferences, prompting the PNP chief to speak in a voice louder than usual. Or, Aglipay, under pressure to prevent Erap's life from calmness and quell a disturbance, then against the Chief Executive's arrival, probably raised his voice in exasperation were impossible requests.

Go ahead, honorable senators, indulge the juvenile temper tantrum of your colleague! And make yourselves the laughing stock of the nation.

Watch out for these whistle-blowers

By Terry V. Quimundo

HE DID not need much praise. Just lots of long pauses and confidence.

PO1 Antonio Aguinaldo Jr. moves through his vulnerable blowing skills would gain him recognition in his four years as a law enforcer.

But his exercise tendencies of the Philippine National Police Hymn using his whistle, while dismount using how to apprehend a snatched on the street, got him several prizes in the first ever whistle-blowing competition of the Western Police District.

"I only learned that I am a contestant yesterday. I did not need much preparation, because whistle-blowing came with my training," said Aguinaldo.

He was the second lone whistle-blower among the top three policemen out of the 30 law enforcers in the district. WPD station and district directors who competed in the event. Six his skill, he received a certificate of recognition and ₱2,000.

Third place was Insp. Elias Mina, detailed in the District Comptrollership and Finance Division, and an officer for 24 years now, for his different styles of blowing her whistle, she was given a certificate and ₱1,000.

Topping the contest with a ₱5,000 cash prize was PO2 Romeo Rebot from the Pandacan police station who has been in service for eight years now.

Judges chose the winners based on the accuracy, originality and symmetry of their performances.

"Using the whistle is more effective than shouting your lungs out and firing it to catch a criminal," Aguinaldo said.

"If you live your gun, homicide/ robbing the attention of the one you are running, chances are, he will run away," he said.

"And there is also the possibility that the bullet could hit someone," he added.

The WPD's whistle-blowing contest is part of its campaign for police to once again use their whistles in crime prevention.

WHISTLE police man Antonio Lalique shows his superiors how he uses the whistle—and in style—during a whistle-blowing contest at the Western Police District headquarters yesterday.

COJUANGCO

Derby, stakes races to boost SEA Games funds

By Mars Anthony Reyes

THE PHILIPPINE Olympic Committee will tap horse racing and cockfighting to additional sources of funds for the Southeast Asian Games the country will host this November.

POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco announced this yesterday when he attended the 13th anniversary celebration of the Philippine Sports Commission.

Cojuangco, a top-time rocker and horse owner, said the derby would be held at the Manuel A. Roxas Golf Course in Caloocan, Cavite.

He said the SEAG preparations are "slowly but surely falling into line" and that all the committees still must push to define their roles outstanding "aspects that we didn't see before."

"I'm very confident that we will meet all the deadlines," said Cojuangco.

He also said the country prefers buying leased new equipment for the SEAG instead rather than accept Vietnam's offer to lend some of the equipment it used two years ago.

"It looks good," said Cojuangco of the Vietnam offer. "But if you look at the cost of transporting them here, installing them, and then after the SEA Games, bringing it back to Vietnam, we could be talking about much...

"We might as well buy new ones that exactly meet our needs and we can also use in the future."

The POC chief, who is also the vice chair of the Philippine SEA Games Organizing Committee, said there are also last-minute changes in the venues, particularly in skeet shooting, which is being proposed to be held in the facilities owned by Gov. Chavit Singson in Ilocos Sur.

He said the Philippine shooting committee is also planning a wide-scale public information drive to get as many people involved in the country's total hosting of the Games as possible.

RAUL Lacierda of Brgy. Ginebra drives past Paul Desormeaux of Montaña during their game last Friday. ALBERT SICAT-CRUZ

Magnolia, Montaña gun for clinchers

COACH Rey Bansal frets league may snatch up mid- the Magnolia-FEU Wizards.

"The boys have been playing straight since 2000," he said. "As much as I want to give them a lot of rest, I can't."

But still there were no signs of weariness after Magnolia (9-1) streaked to its 10th straight win at the expense of 4th-seed in the PBL Open Champs standing last Friday.

"The team has been showing the right attitude," noted Bansal, whose Wizards will try to sweep the 4th-seed Pasig Pirates in Game 2 of their semifinal showdown at 6 p.m. today at the Makati Coliseum.

While the Wizards aim for their second straight trip to the finals, the Montaña squad will vie for their first-ever appearance in the Green Giants' lone Tortilla in their own town of three series at 4 p.m.

"Winning the first game was very important coz we have to finish it in Game 2," said coach Robert Montaña. "We don't want the series to go to Game 3."

Last Saturday, the Jewels unwrapped a surprise offensive package in Al Magpayo and slowly forwards, while the Tortillas reportedly joined on JR Quinahan. The lady Pirates can solidify it as early as tonight.

The Wizards are also hoping to setup it up, but Bansal is bracing for a Webcast comeback.

"Without a very strong team," he said. "They have the ability and the cast to figure out the best game plan.

And that's what Webcast coach Cuby Garcia intends to do. "We're not going to allow them to finish the series," he said. "Due to overall the series, we have to match Magnolia's intensity. It's not impossible to beat them two in a row."

Coach Aric Sta. Ana similarly shares some changes in the Tortillas' game plan. "We focused only on Lito Diaz's backcourt, Orbit Gonzales and Jason Webb," he said. "But we could be revealed. "It was a big mistake for us. After viewing the tapes, we are going to make big adjustments in Game 2."

Sta. Ana similarly shares some changes in the Tortillas' game plan. "We focused only on Lito Diaz's backcourt, Orbit Gonzales and Jason Webb," he said. "But we could be revealed. "It was a big mistake for us. After viewing the tapes, we are going to make big adjustments in Game 2."

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Kimmy Cease rookie did all the Jason Mendez 16-point performance in the Wizards win, 67-54.

Webcast, though, got good plays from Harvin Delgueros and Sanchez Magbanua. After a lethargic first half, the duo staged a third-quarter streak that erased a 30-16 halftime deficit to lead.

But the Statesmanners rally last season in the closing minutes.

Antonio M. Mayo

V-LEAGUE

PSC Legends take on Lady Pirates

By Mocong R. Castillo

COACH Tats Suzara believes his Philippine Sports Commission Lady Legends are ready for the finals and those standing in their way will be casualties of their title quest.

The Legends try to prove Suzara right when they clash with Garnet in 1 p.m. today at the Muntinlupa's League of the Wild Coliseum.

Against the Lady Pirates whose name is now downtrodden, the Lady Legends will be desperate until a win to live another day.

"We're peaking at the right time," coach Suzara said yesterday. "Just maybe for the fans who don't care who we play like just want to hear any team we play."

PSC is to hold spot with a 6-4 card and is with tricks would lose on to knock the Lady Pirates out of further contention, has nearer the top seeds of the No. 3 seeding in the final four.

Suzara predicted his team would go all the way but bowing quite a strong statement considering the strength of the teams ahead of the Legends in the standings.

Jimmy Mariano, the defending champion, is at 10-1, while LoSalle, the reigning UAAP titlist, has won its last four games after opening up with a loss to the Tigresses on opening day.

"We can see the quality of the players it is long tournament like this," Suzara added. "While we are already getting into shape, the others are struggling to win their points."

Thoughthe did not actually say it, Suzara was referring to the Tigresses and the Lady Spikers who are winning in struggling fashions.

Jamby Suzara was pushed to a do-or-die game against Cherry Tan-Caktiong, while La Salle needed a fourth to salvage past gritty San Sebastian but Saturday.

Meanwhile, the Lady Stags and the Suzara clash in a re-hearing game at 5 p.m.

SPORTSWATCH

N. Ecija, Tarnauan batters blast rivals

TALAVERA, Nueva Ecija — Pro Gymnasium Rhea Shirley scored a two-run homerun in the third inning as defending champion Nueva Ecija outslugged Makati City, 6-3, in today's six-inning game to the first 10 High School baseball championship at the Talavera National High School field here. Kenneth Gesulo hits a triple to open the homestanding batters rallying but the defending champion Nueva Ecija shook to life. The homerun scored Jun Jay Talavera (Mayor Bel Castelo. Shane Feliz needs one more victory hangs on the consecutive semifinals in the other diamond. Ralph Galvez, Bernard Gomez and Ramjo Lucero hit a homerun each right to the fence to give Nueva Ecija a 6-0 lead. Makati City scored its first run in the fourth inning. 11-0. Distinguished recognized Mike Inocito Charles Hernan with 10 hits. In other games, Malolos downed Tagaytay, 11-6, without getting a single hit.

CESC, 3 others lead BP Cup tourney

CEBU Lapu-Lapu City — CESC registered its second victory outshining Philippine Christian Institute in a low-scoring defensive match, 20-10, Sunday in the 2nd Cebu Provincial Cup inter-School Cluster Basketball Tournament in other games, Talisay Academy dealt Union Christian High School its second defeat, 31-15, while Asian Christian High School started its 3rd defense by topping St. Stephen's High School, 30-14. Games could be viewed tonight on Saturday as CESC meets Talisay, Philadelphia School plays host to Asian Christian High School, and Union Christian battles Jo-San. Three games will determine the top qualifiers in the finals as per the two-to-a-beat advantage in the semifinals.

Fitwap-Time Life chess raises prize pot

MAKE money in the first Fitwap-Time Life chess tournament has been increased to make the event more competitive, Fitwap Marketing Inc. CEO and president Fernito "Ditto" D. Tagarao said the elimination in the Open division will now have cash prizes. P50,000 for champion, P30,000 for 1st runner, P15,000 for 2nd runner P10,000 third place P10,000 fourth P5,000, fifth P3,000, sixth P3,000 and awards to fifth P1,000 each. Competitions will also be held in the semi-finals, women's, senior, junior, amateur, and kiddies divisions. Among those ready entries for the two-day tournament slated nov. 17 and 18 at the Trade Center of Manila Shopping Complex in Mandaluyong City are grandmaster Rosendo "Jerry" Antonio Jr., and Mellisa Mariano. 6 and DM-ired Mark Paragua. Marlon Bernardino

Santiago lifts fifth World Slasher Cup

TECALITLAN in the outskirts resident in the local circuit, sportsman Jun Santiago still ruled the world of slasher racing after winning the championship in the 1998 World Slasher Cup in hard-fought Saturday night at the Arandas Coliseum. Santiago shared the honors with his All-American partner Joseph Wrinkell. The 2004 Grand Game Club Cruiser of the Year Former joker Boy Mercurio emerged as co-champion. He fought over the international Santiago's Jun Family Motorcycle Club 12 and Mercurio's Mercurio Motorcycle Club 10 in the 1998 World Slasher Cup. Santiago's Jun Family Motorcycle Club 12 and Mercurio's Mercurio Motorcycle Club 10 in the 1998 World Slasher Cup. Santiago's Jun Family Motorcycle Club 12 and Mercurio's Mercurio Motorcycle Club 10 in the 1998 World Slasher Cup. Santiago's Jun Family Motorcycle Club 12 and Mercurio's Mercurio Motorcycle Club 10 in the 1998 World Slasher Cup.

Choosing the right exercise

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

I BELIEVED many calls to mention to my two current players about Michael Jordan's formula of success. All touted positively (Meaning, they agreed with Tim Cone my, who declared Jordan's #23 of Brenna program).

I am a bit surprised that many of the callers were not really athletes in the common sense of the word. Many were executives and businessmen, who said to me: I have become their idol in that they have started exercising for programs. Thus, to continue with Cone's highly successful Bisons regimen, here's more. Again, this one will be Bob Condor of Playboy.

But before we proceed, who said Playboy is purely a for men-only magazine? It was in Playboy that I have read the best articles ever written about Marlon Brando, Muhammad Ali and John Lennon, to name but three of the world's celebrities who graced the pages of the international monthly sex-interest magazine.

So, here's Condor's genius again.

CHANGE OF PACE. One of Condor's secrets in interval training, wherein you are required each week to short track work, doing these wind sprints you hated back in high school. Also spins through your weight routine—while maintaining perfect form—for tremendous results in performance.

The key lies in enabling yourself to enough to exhaust muscles while maintaining correct technique. Next long enough between exercise to stay in form, but continue to challenge yourself.

HEAVY THINKING #2. "Nobody works out for three hours," says Condor. "There's usually a lot of socializing involved." Sadly Dan wants the time, exercise intelligently. Target the small talk and dedicate your time to moving. Don't wait for a machine, use another one. See how far you can go on a bike in ten minutes, then hop on a rower for another ten. Grower suggests half an hour in the cardio room. Do three different machines at matching intensity and don't take a break. If the weight room is packed, do some floor work, abdominal crunches, push-ups, straight-leg lunges, jumping jacks, pull-ups or chin-ups.

CORPORATE FLEXIBILITY. Muscle tightness problems in adapting to physical demands. That's why many fitness enthusiasts list a decrease in cardiovascular conditioning as strength.

Condor says to keep your body guessing. Change your routine every month. If you usually run first, and then lift weights, switch it around. Do lower-body work first, then the upper body. Change hand positions on your lifts. Try a new exercise class. Play a different sport.

Shatter those rule the same like at the health club, say another model. Better yet, try another piece of equipment. Use the random setting frequently, because that adds to the element of physiological surprise.

Haven't you noticed? Grower hates monotony. So, he advises us not to do the same thing over and over again. The trick is, to try new things. That's why some say walking gets to be a bore if you do it all the time at the same pace. So, throw in words in the morning walk. Throw a week in the afternoon, walk. Once a week maybe, depending on your age and physical condition to install your doctor always, of course), jog instead of walk. Or bike. Jump. Skip rope. Dance too.

I say, walk. Be the garden, cultivate the plants, savor a new recipe or my favorite restaurant. Like, do many other things, whenever suits me. Even find something to fine with me. I have a pair of kettlebells right in my backyard. It's fun watching the many curious looks my neighbors cast at them. Or, better yet,

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Tell us your feedback

Peso rallies to 55.40:$1 as stocks surge

Lorenzo to exercise right over Del Monte stake

DMCI-HOLDINGS said it would exercise its right to match the final offer for a 40-percent stake in Del Monte Pacific Ltd. (DMPL) that Tabacalera group Grupo Luis Conde is selling.

The Lorenzo family controls almost 30 percent of Del Monte and is now the single biggest shareholder if it buys Conde's stake.

Conde said last week that Italy's Soderoni may bid and he would like to sell the 40-percent stake to Chinese-Filipino businessman Lucio Tan.

Ricardo Lorenzo, executive of Del Monte Philippines, said the family was looking at increasing its stake in Del Monte.

"We could also match [Soderoni offer] but we're not talking," Lorenzo said.

Bankrupt food group Consunji is to be announced that an definitive agreement has been signed with Rizal Holdings Corp. owned by Tan, one of the richest people in the Philippines and the region.

The latter stakes in Philippine airlines, Asia Brewery, Fortune Tobacco, Philippine National Bank, Allied Bank and Equitable Holdings.

"Terms of a definitive agreement is signed, there is no certainty that a mandatory general offer for DMPL will take place," Cito said in a statement to the Philippine stock exchange.

Administration of Cito are looking at selling some of its assets to allow it to repay debt.

Cito defaulted of more than 1 billion euros ($1.3 billion) of bonds in late 2002 and it being liquidated after investors rejected a restructuring plan. — Reuters

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO yesterday climbed to a year-high of 55.40 against the US dollar as the strong influx of foreign "hot" money or portfolio investments perked up the stock exchange, thus boosting the local currency.

Currency traders said the previously oppositions narrowed the jump in the Philippine Stock Exchange composite index past 2,000 for the first time in five years.

The Peso yesterday went up by 21.47 points or 1.50 percent to 2,018.28, led by the recently reorganized mining sector which rose by 7.7 percent.

At the Philippine Dealing System, the peso opened at the intraday low of 55.59 and hit an intraday high of 55.30, before closing at 55.40 against the greenback on heavy volume of $273.3 million.

The local currency thus gained 24.9 centavos at the end of the day from Friday's closing of 55.645 to the dollar. It was its strongest finish since Jan. 12 last year.

"The driver for the peso is equity flow. Look at the volume and level of the stock market. There are nothing you have seen in the last five years," said Rene de Guzman, chief foreign exchange dealer at Unionbank of the Philippines.

Yesterday's catch rally started at the market's point to fresh five-year highs above 2,000 points as investors bought into companies expected to announce developments for 2004.

Traders said the government's decision to lower the 2005 budget deficit target on expectations of improving revenues also boosted investor sentiment.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index's closing of 2,018.28 was the most index's first finish since Feb. 16, 2000, when it closed at 2,010.35. The broader all-shares index fell 7.98 points to 1,168.80.

Gainers beat losers 70 to 31, with 36 stocks unchanged.

Volume totalled 8.61 billion shares worth P1.86 billion from 5.29 billion shares worth P1.66 billion on Friday.

Foreign investors purchased P86.12 million and sold P174.4 million worth of shares.

"Investors are riding on the wave of strong positive economic indicators and a vibrant corporate outlook. We just re-lined to drop a little bit of money," said Asiavest Guidlord Financials Holdings Inc.

"Shares surrounding [the market] are strong, at least by the first quarter," said PCCI Securities president Francisco Libarios.

Libarios said the market's mood is likely because investors note both improvements in form of positive developments in the first quarter.

"You have the coming summit coming up in February, there are the strong corporate earnings coming out, then there's the hot-

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Increased gov't fees seen raising ₱31B

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE NATIONAL government expects to boost by about 6% percent this year its revenue collection from the higher fees and charges to be imposed by line agencies and state-owned firms.

According to documents from the Department of Finance, the government expects P30.47 billion worth of fees and charges from various government agencies. This is much bigger than the P28.37 billion collected in 2004.

The increase in the fees and charges imposed by government agencies is one of the administrative measures undertaken by the in-your administration to address its weak revenue-generating efforts.

Outgoing Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong earlier said the executive branch sets banking on the administrative measures to raise revenue while its legislative proposals, including increases in custom taxes, were taking time to be approved by Congress.

The DOF and the Department of Budget and Management earlier stated a multi-pronged approach involving government agencies and state-owned companies, especially those that have not yet raised their fees and charges in years, to implement its investment effort with little rising cost of operations.

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PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo autographs the hard hat of president and CEO of Manila and Co. Jpr Ramos Manila (C) and visit Mindoro Members of Tsuneishi Group of Japan. Tsuneishi Heavy Industries Inc. inaugurated a new dipang at to dispatch Balanacan, Cebu

Petron profit jumps 11.3% to ₱5.5B

By Abigail L. Ho

PROFIT of market leader Petron Corp. jumped 11.3 percent to about P5.5 billion in 2004 from P5.1 billion the year before, installed financial statements showed.

While posting nine-year growth, the company likewise surpassed its 2004 net income target of P5.3 billion on the back of strong sales volumes and high export margins.

Overall sales volumes surged 6 percent to 52.75 million barrels in 2004 compared with 49.78 million barrels posted in 2003.

Sales to the domestic market accounted by 11.6 percent, picking up Petron's market share to 37.6 percent from 36.6 percent in 2003, maintaining its leadership position in the local market.

With world oil prices soaring, Petron's export revenues ballooned more than 40 percent to its net income for the year.

"Product prices in the Asian region went at peak levels in 2004 and we aimed to capture the opportunity through exports and timed supplies," Petron president Ricardo Al-Fuddegh said in a statement yesterday. "But import also bring as dollar revenues which provide us with a natural hedge against fluctuations in the local currency."

He added that the

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The mining sector—best buy

Alex Arabaxi

PHILIPPINE Supreme Court upholding the constitutionality of the Mining Act of 1995, a top level lobbying roadshow was held to drum up last week to promote corporation in the fields of mining exploration and development between the two countries. Investment community totaling $1.1 billion were made. Following this, we have mentioned mining conference will be held in March on Feb. 23 to 4 Mar ahead of the event. I told readers that they should concentrate on the mining sector and call centers. Both have come very substantially and this week, I propose that they look at the mining sector.

Within the next six years, this sector is expected to generate $6 billion in investment by ordering initially 23 major mining operations. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) stated that local and foreign investors have started to form a feeder to its office. In particular, foreigners are interested because their is an estimated $600 billion worth of gold, silver, waiting to be dug out, and they are now allowed to be majority investors. In addition to gold, there is copper, silver, nickel, iron and coal. The latter is being offered by DBRC, mainly to cement factories, although a public offering of NEDA.

The DENR said the 23 mining operations, with the ability to generate $5 billion to gross sales annually, would also generate excise taxes of $0.14 million and income taxes of $434 million yearly. Of course, this will not happen overnight but some projects could become visible in the year 2002 and the stock market always looks ahead to future prospects. This is why long-term investors should invest in this sector.

"These projects will contribute substantially to poverty alleviation, particularly in the countryside, and to the overall economic growth of the Philippines." The shortage of land by the Supreme Court is the most important event which has taken place in this country for many years, and its effect will be far-reaching and beneficial. Also expected to become active during the period are 37 exploration projects with annual expenditures of $500 million, according to the director of mines and provincial bureau.

So I picked up on the right sectors internally, but I do not profess to be a mining analyst and so commended the three stocks to accurate sales, just as they do to beauty contests. Our confident women's department has just concluded an in-depth study, which I propose to commence. They get the credit for the following article but I get the payment.

In the 1980s the Philippines was ranked the 5th biggest producer of gold and the 9th largest producer of copper in the world. The industry contributed a large chunk of the country's GDP and 21.3 percent of total exports. Today, the Philippines is not in the top 10 gold producing nations and has ceased to become a major player in copper. Low metal prices in the '90s, plus the difficulties brought about by the Asian crisis of 1997, were the major factors that forced many Coal Base to cease mining service, worldwide.

The new six oil commodity prices, thanks largely to the voracious appetite of China, has made mining more attractive again, but local companies do not have the capital or the technology to do it alone. Foreign companies have the resources but are unable to act without a policy with regard to incentives need to be established quickly and applied on a consistent basis. Even then, rehabilitated mines are not expected to come on stream before 2007.

Now who will take much longer to become operational because they still have to go through the lengthy process of confirming their commercial viability. Multiple tests to ensure the extent and quality of reserves can take a year or so, and the actual development (which often entails transporting heavy equipment to remote areas) could last three to four years. Any current metal prices going by the estimated small deposit. Nevertheless, it says that China, which is among the biggest buyers of metallic and non-metallic minerals, continues to expand its economy at a fast pace. What follows is so technical that I have already taken three aspirins to clear my headache and I will gently simplify it.

Philex B

On much estimates, the stock is trading at 11.5 times earnings and twice its book value. This is well below the sector average and no other mining stock comes close to these valuations. The company has three mines, the Bulwal (Benguet), Sablayan and Boyongan (Surigao). Of these, only the first is currently operational. Boyongan having been decommissioned in 2002 due to low gold prices. At Boyongan, a major find is still being drilled under a joint venture with Anglo American. The aim is to open-cut the Anglo deposit and start full-scale development of 500 million tons of reserves (at least). This may take another year or two and then may be only 300 million tons.

However, the property is right beside another prospective mine site owned by Manila Mining, listed mine whose proven and probable ore reserves are 500 million tons of reserves, by teaming up with Manila Mining as well as Philex. But the results may not be known for another three to four years. Using a low price of $290 as source for gold, Philex is believed to be worth between P1.79 and P1.86. The stock is rated as a BUY with a price target of P1.80. Gold is currently $427 an ounce.

Lepanto B

Like P1, LC only has commercial operations in one area, Mankayan in the Benguet Provinces. Although relatively young, the two mines probably have a combined remaining life of only eight to 14 years. The grades are also two years per ton against an expected 10 grams. LC also owns 60 percent of Far Southeast Gold Resources, which a company-only visible but has yet to find a producer. The problem is that the ore in Lepanto is the surface, making it technically difficult and expensive to process. Do the other hand, LC is currently in talks with Ivanhoe Mines and this may, or may not, lead to a financial and technical assistance agreement. Net income is expected to reach P200 million, meaning the shares are selling at 44 times earnings. This is expensive and even through potential increases are higher, the shares are rated as HEETHOL.

Manila Mining B

The most crowded activity a long time ago. Management is excited by its full-service mine adjacent to Philex in bargain but, as already stated, its reserves will not be known for considerable time. Therefore, under 1 to a SPECULATIVE BUY. It might fold for $0.4, it would mean that they would enter into a joint venture with PX, so the latter would already B.

Atlas

The company may be the first to reopen its copper mines in Toledo (Cebu), in person, is a dormant but could restart in two years with the help of Alakor Corp. debts may also have sticked but there is little data to go on and the stock rates it as a SPECULATIVE BUY. It is $0.9 (1.8 stock).

To summarize, after an exhaustive and exhausting study, the research department picks PXer PSB as its preferred BUY.

The market has been rising steadily as foreign funders clear money into our Bay stocks. The risk factor is extremely high so every trader's call to control. I take off your profit before early.

PH has announced a one for two rights issue at P1. All stockholders must take up the new shares at P1.

While the market is a-stirring, I will concentrate on it and forget the jokes. Next week, I will write about business school graduates.

Business Mirror

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
MINING & OIL					
Atlas Consolidated Mining	1.10	1.10	1.05	1.05	1,000
Benguet Corp. 'A'	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	100
Benguet Corp. 'B'	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	100
Lepanto Consolidated Mining 'A'	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80	1,000
Lepanto Consolidated Mining 'B'	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80	1,000
Philex Mining Corp. 'A'	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1,000
Philex Mining Corp. 'B'	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
COMMERCIAL / INDUSTRIAL					
Ayala Corporation	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Ayala Land, Inc. 'A'	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Ayala Land, Inc. 'B'	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Filinvest Land, Inc.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Robinsons Land Corp. 'A'	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Robinsons Land Corp. 'B'	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
SM Prime Holdings, Inc.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
FINANCIAL					
Ayala Corporation	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Bank of the Philippine Islands	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Philippine National Bank	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Security Bank Corporation	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Union Bank of the Philippines	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
SERVICES					
Ayala Corporation	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Bank of the Philippine Islands	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Philippine National Bank	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Security Bank Corporation	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Union Bank of the Philippines	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
HOTEL, RESTAURANT & TOURISM					
Ayala Corporation	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Bank of the Philippine Islands	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Philippine National Bank	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Security Bank Corporation	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Union Bank of the Philippines	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Corporation	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Bank of the Philippine Islands	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Philippine National Bank	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Security Bank Corporation	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Union Bank of the Philippines	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
HOLDING					
Ayala Corporation	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Bank of the Philippine Islands	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Philippine National Bank	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Security Bank Corporation	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000
Union Bank of the Philippines	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1,000

Semirara starts selling shares to investors in HK, Singapore

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SEMIRARA Mining Corp. (Semirara), the country's largest producer of coal, has kicked off its offering of shares to investors in Asia, particularly in Singapore and Hong Kong.

Sources said the company had decided to change the price range for its stock offering to P22 to P26 per share, from the original level of P22 to P44 a share.

Investors will offer 70.6 million shares to international investors and 15.16 million shares to local investors. A roadshow was held in the United States last week and considerable activity was undertaken in Singapore yesterday. The next roadshow will be held today in Hongkong.

"We are on our last leg. The response is overwhelming. The downgrading of the country's sovereign rating by Standard & Poor's has no effect on the offering," a source familiar with the roadshow said.

In a separate disclosure, DMCI Holdings Inc., which owns 94 percent of Semirara before the offering, said Semirara would extend the offer period for trading participants or brokers to Jan. 26. The share offer period will be extended on Jan. 27. A total of 15.16 million shares were set aside for brokers which can be purchased in multiples of 5,000 shares.

Semirara's international offering covers 70.57 million shares.

The net proceeds from the shares issued during Semirara's international offer is slated on P494.

Semirara expects to fund its expansion plans this year by securing $24 million in debt from suppliers and raising additional capital from the stock offering.

The net proceeds from the offering will also be used to fund the retirement of debt.

Semirara plans to execute debt worth $28 million for the expansion of its plant capacity to 3.3 million tons from the present 2.6 million tons a year.

PSBank posts 20% growth in net profit

By Doris C. Dumlao

PHILIPPINE Savings Bank, a unit of Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co., posted a 20.6 percent growth in net profit to P694 from year-ago level on solid earnings from consumer banking, investment and acquired assets.

PSBank president Pascual Garcia III said yesterday: "2000 was a very good year for PSBank as we demonstrated our ability to grow our business organically by acquiring market share from other banks' competitors."

He said the bank's working initiatives showed notable improvement in our market penetration across all major product groups.

"We took the opportunity provided by the strong growth in our core business to invest P200 million in new branches and technology. These will allow us to serve our customers better and be more competitive in 2001, "he added.

The rise in our income reflected the expansion in the total loan portfolio by 21 percent to P24.5 billion and in deposits, which rose by P32 billion or 45 percent to P102.2 billion.

The bank's total investment portfolio stood at P46 billion, up by P12 billion or 36 percent from 2000, while total capital now amounts to P4.6 billion.

PSBank is the country's second largest thrift bank in terms of assets, next to SSS Family Bank.

Its earnings per share stood at P2.70 last year while return on equity improved to 11.4 percent from 9.6 percent in 2000.

The chief bank said it managed to grow its balance sheet without sacrificing asset quality. Its non-performing loan ratio was contained at 6.1 percent, better than the third quarter's 6.6 percent and the industry's 16.36 million shares of PSBank from the open market, increasing its stake to 79 percent from 64 percent.

CAP set to submit land titles for asset-share swap deal

COLLEEN ARSENADO Has Philippines Inc. said it would file shortly with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) three titles for the land that was offered by an asset-share swap deal with its associated property firm.

Sources said CAP filed with the SEC yesterday its application seeking clearance for 2,900 hectares of land. These pieces of property are held by the Bonn Group and the PH-Bonn Group which will subscribe to CAP shares.

The SEC permit counsel earlier said the agency did not accept the property offered by PH-Bonn Properties Inc., for the asset-share swap deal unless they did not have clear titles.

The PH-Bonn group said it would review the titles of its land holdings to determine which ones could be used for the deal with CAP.

Green Square Properties Inc. of the Bonn Group owns the property in Quezon that was offered for the swap, but the property PH-Bonn Properties owns the Cavite property.

PH-Bonn Properties, a wholly-owned subsidiary of PH-Bonn Land Inc. (BIL), earlier submitted its P496.2 million worth of CAP shares—126,307 common shares and 4.84 million preferred shares. The assessed will be used by the acquiring pieces of property of Bonn Cavite to CAP.

The SEC earlier issued a letter requesting additional time that it does not receive the property from said they needed to determine questionable land titles and issue separate titles for the land that would be used for the swap.

In a May 26 letter to Ramon Bong, president of Green Square Properties, an SEC said also explained that the SEC could not approve the application before the titles for the swap were ready.

Bonn, through Green Square Properties and Green Circle Properties and Residences, is proposing to subscribe to CAP shares worth P1.4 billion. Under the deal, Bonn will transfer to CAP parcels of land in Subic town in the western province of Zambales and Dingalan Bay, the source of the titles for the property were said to be in the name of the government. Bonn then reportedly proposed to issue separate titles for each set of claims under the agreement to CAP. Bonn will also reportedly invest 50,000 hectares of land in the area.

CAP is pushing for the property-for-share swap to enhance its asset and liabilities.

The SEC said in an oversight report in March last year that when his contributed to CAP's problems were due to heavy investments in the Fil-Estate group.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

Fil-Hispano OKs offering

LIONEL cut course operator Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp. yesterday said it would raise about P300 million through a stock rights offering within the first half of the year.

Fil-Hispano chair and president Tarsicio Medalla said proceeds of the offering would be used to fund the company's entry into high-growth, non-voice businesses particularly information technology (IT)-enabled services, infrastructure, and possible acquisitions.

The company is planning to sell its stocks to existing shareholders at about 90 percent discount.

"I see the company's board yesterday approved the planned stock rights offering. Some 300 million common shares will be sold. Fil-Hispano, he said, was also considering possible regional strategic partnerships and alliances which further increase infrastructure improvement. Clarissa C. Batino

Gov't waived ₱1.9B in taxes in '04

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE NATIONAL government waived 19.87 billion worth of taxes and import duties last year, up slightly from 19.72 billion in 2003, according to the Department of Finance.

The amount of foregone taxes last year was based on ₱83.774 billion worth of imports made by investors extended fiscal incentives under tax laws.

Of the ₱1.87 billion, the bulk or ₱1.14 billion, was in the form of value-added tax exemptions, and ₱730 million in duty-free import privileges.

According to the performance report of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, a unit of the Department of Finance tasked to process applications for duty and tax exemptions, contractors of energy-related activities got the most import incentives.

Duties and value-added taxes on imports worth ₱1.1 billion by contractors of exclusive energy-related activities reached ₱634 million, out of ₱5.14 billion worth of imports.

Following contractors of energy projects were non-stock and non-profit organizations, importers of magazine and book publications, the Asian Development Bank, and qualified firms registered with the Board of Investments.

Fiscal incentives, especially those given to BOI-registered firms, are intended to attract investments into the country.

The government, however, has submitted a proposal to Congress to rationalize the country's fiscal incentives because of those have already served their purpose.

Officials said the tax maze of incentives in the country only resulted in huge revenue losses, with no equivalent gains in productivity.

The government said import exemptions due to the granting of fiscal incentives in 2003 alone slashed over ₱100 billion, exceeding the government's ₱100.9 billion budget deficit for that year.

The proposed rationalization of fiscal incentives covers various special laws as well as several value-added tax exemptions.

The fiscal incentives rationalization plan, however, does not cover the duty and VAT exemptions granted by Tariff and Customs Code.

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Petron profit jumps 11.3%

Please page B2

oil firm had also become "smarter" in its marketing and business strategies, underscoring the import more and taking advantage of the opportunities presented by the export market.

Petron likewise posted strong growth in its retail business, he said in an earlier interview, making this another key contributor to higher 2004 profits.

To help boost the growth of the company's retail business, he said Petron would be accelerating its plans to build 30 company owned and company operated service stations from the present three years, starting in 2006.

These moves will enable Petron to take advantage of additional revenue from non-

fuel businesses, including food and other consumer services.

The oil firm also expects to further boost its profit, increase its operating efficiency and cut its dollar spending with the recent commissioning of its 10,000 barrels-a-day hydrotreater unit.

The new facility will allow Petron to produce Clean Air Act-compliant gasoline here in the country.

As of now, no local oil firm can produce in country the ecologene blend needed to make clean gasoline CAA-compliant.

With this new facility, a part of the company's $100 million refinery upgrade project, Petron can not only refine its own CAA-compliant gasoline but also potentially supply the product to its competitors.

Peso rallies to 55.40:$1 . . .

From page B1

ter than-expected GDP (gross domestic product) numbers set to be released," said Libed o.

The summit comes amid renewed fears expressed by the ruling sector after last month's Supreme Court ruling allowing foreign investors to gain control of local mining operations. Several foreign investors have already expressed interest in making up stakes in local mining companies.

The government is scheduled to release 2004 Gross Domestic Product data on Jan. 31. Last week, Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri said the country's GDP growth rate likely reached 6.1 percent, surpassing government's target of 4.9-5.9 percent. With reports from AFP, AP

Higher

From page B1

Examples of fees and charges on which collection will be enforced by the Land Registration Authority (LRA) for land title transfers, the packing fees for airplane cargoes collected by the Air Transportation Office, and passport fees imposed by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). The DFA, the DOA, Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Customs are the biggest collectors of fees and charges.

According to a BIR source official, the ₱50.07-billion collection target for this year was raised from the original goal of ₱45.17 billion after the government has taken into account the additional agencies and once-owned companies that are supposed to increase their fees and charges after the issuance of the circular.

The official, however, said the directive to raise fees and charges should be merely supposed to increase the target of ₱50.07 billion might be too optimistic.

In 2004, the ₱49.27-billion collection was actually short of the ₱52.3-billion target. The 2004 collection, however, was higher than the ₱44.64 billion collected the previous year.

The DOF said the increase in fees and charges was not only meant to raise revenue for the cash-starved government, but also to adapt with rising operational expenses. The DOF said the last time the government implemented an increase in fees and charges was in January 2000.

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BUSINESS

Ayala: Emerging trends spell hope for RP

By Cecille E. Fernandez
INQUIRER Bureau

CEBU CITY—Bucking the gloomy spell cast by the country's current fiscal problems and the downgrade of its credit rating, the president of the Ayala Corporation said these were emerging trends that would allow the country to actually thrive over the next 10 years.

AYALA

Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala on Friday told delegates of the 3rd Global Filipino Networking Convention here that he remained optimistic in the country's future, believing that the Philippines soon would be in a position to "reap the demographic dividend" from its young population.

Ayala said that in 2000, the country's working-age population would constitute 65.8 percent of the population. He expected this figure to increase to 65.9 percent by 2010, 66.6 percent by 2015, and 66.9 percent by 2020.

This is "radically different" to the situation of many developed countries that are seeing the percentage of their elderly going up, he said.

"To economists and demographers, such a demographic structure can present opportunities for economic growth," Ayala said. "Persons with such a demographic structure may enjoy a boom in income growth because of the higher share of the working population, the accelerated investment of capital, and reduced spending on dependents."

This demographic transition will, in the long run, stimulate economic growth, when combined with effective public policies, he said.

The phenomenon, known as "the demographic dividend," is but one of many emerging trends Ayala cited for this convention delegates.

The other trends are the push toward decentralized and judicial reforms, and the move to empower leaders at the local government level.

"These trends are already evident in some areas today and should amplify in the coming years," Ayala said. "What they do, they will have a profound effect on the level of investment in all sectors of society, which will provide a solid foundation for the country's sustained and accelerated modernization and development."

He also noted that the Supreme Court was finally aware of the drag its interventions had had on the economy.

"Its recent move to affirm the Mining Act should open up a long neglected sector that has so much potential," he said. "This is not a positive indication that long delayed cases are finally going to be settled, and that justice administration is beginning to work."

Another trend he cited was the rising role of the enterprise in the economy and the growing recognition of the importance of open markets and competition in the key to a better future.

With the rise of globalization, Ayala said it has become clear that certain policies of the past, like economic nationalism and protectionism, would not work.

"Filipino consumers now realize that they can no longer be shielded from foreign competition if the country is to go forward," he said. "The protectionist barriers and monopolies are slowly coming down, and recent moves to encourage Asean economic integration will hasten this process.

While these trends might be "harbingers of change," leading to the country's economic development, Ayala, however, said it cannot rest on its laurels.

"If we are to make the most of these emerging trends, we must take decisive and consistent action," he said. "What they do, they will have a profound effect on the level of investment in all sectors of society, which will provide a solid foundation for the country's sustained and accelerated modernization and development."

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"If we are to make the most of these emerging trends, we must take decisive and consistent action to build on the foundations we have now put in place," he said.

Give us BSP chief with balls, traders urge

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

THE MOST fragile hearts in Philippine governance should have the "balls" to stand up to President Macapagal-Arroyo because appointing a investment lobby to the central bank would be worse than a credit downgrade, unwinding to local businessmen.

In their appeal, businessmen interviewed by the Inquirer said that the designation of Governor Rafael Buenaventura (CORE-Bank) as finance chief should set the tone for Ms. Arroyo's next Cabinet appointments by getting more proven sector experts in her government.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura's term is set to end in July this year and President Arroyo's choice for his successor is highly anticipated by local and foreign investors because of its implications on monetary policy.

"We need an independent, talented person to head the BSP," said Ruel Concepcion, chair of the private consumers watchdog Consumer and Oil Price Watch. "Someone who has the balls to say no to bad monetary policy."

The Philippines is currently in the grip of crippling fiscal problems. On Jan. 17, international credit ratings firm Standard & Poor's cut the country's credit rating by a notch over the government's perceived unwinding of the fiscal situation.

Moody's Investors Service followed suit on Jan. 19, saying the country's credit rating was worth due to chronic inaction over the government's handling of the fiscal crisis.

A businessman noted that Buenaventura proved to be an ideal BSP head in the last three years (which included six election years) because he is considered as "outsider" to the Arroyo administration having been appointed by deposed President Joseph Estrada.

Although it will be the President who will pick the exact successor to central bank governor in years, the BSP chairman acquires its head to be independent because monetary policy is not always in tune with the fiscal policy especially on the level of government borrowings that affects interest rates and inflation.

Two candidates in the running for BSP slots—Securities and Exchange Commission Chair Fe Barin and Monetary Board member Vicente Valdepeñas—are perceived to be "too close" to the President.

Investments to fuel growth of Mindanao economy in '05

DAVAO CITY—Investments trickling into the region have buoyed hopes that Mindanao will post a record economic growth this year.

Jesus Dureza, chair of the Mindanao Economic and Development Council, told the business that improving peace and order conditions heightened business confidence as well as domestic interest in Mindanao, resulting in palpable economic gains for the country's food basket.

"Looking at the current Mindanao development, there is so much optimism and confidence that Mindanao will sustain economic momentum and may even surpass economic growth recorded in the previous years," Dureza said.

He said Mindanao was banking on economic sectors in the traditional agriculture industry – especially of, bana, bananas and pineapples – which is geared for both domestic and export markets.

Dureza likewise expected the region to get a portion of the investments pouring into the information technology sector.

Two more call centers had already kicked off operations in Davao and General Santos, on top of Cybercity Interactive put up by 11-Gate Ltd. in Davao.

Medco was likewise looking forward to realizing its investments this year.

Pilipinas Kao Inc. (PKI), a Japanese-owned firm, is investing P3.7 billion in a new facility that will increase its fatty alcohol production to 160,000 tons a year.

The investment project will replace PKI's existing plant in Jasaan, Misamis Oriental.

Eurocu, a South Korean resort and development company, is also constructing a 54-room luxury hotel at Punkle Gulf Estates in Cagayan de Oro City.

The hotel will be completed by the third quarter this year.

Mindanao attracted 11 new investment projects last year, which created 930 jobs from January to October.

These include property of Sterling Industries Inc., in the northern region of Bicol; Philippine Bronze of Ilocos Pangasinan Inc., Aseptil Manufacturing Corp., Roylco & Asia Food Corp., Ubelco Inc. Miguel Inc. and Global Trend Seeds Farmers.

Residential and commercial buildings also increased by 22.3 percent.

While Mindanao's foreign trade slumped in the first eight months of last year, the last quarter export figures were projected to level off with the export growth in 2003.

The local tourism sector has also showed some color after rebounding from a slump.

Some 659,737 incoming and outgoing air passengers were recorded in Mindanao airports, up 9.21 percent from the same period in 2003.

Also, Mindanao air cargo volume recorded a 5.43 percent hike as of third quarter last year, compared to the same period in 2003.

Jeffrey M. Tupas, PIA Mindanao Bureau

Neda calls for ₱1B more investments in tourism

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE NETHOUSE Economic and Development Authority has urged government to allocate at least $1 billion in investments to maximize the potentials of the country's tourism industry.

Neda Director General Romulo Neri said the Philippines has a tremendous opportunity to position itself as a primary tourist destination, as travelers from Europe and the United States are looking for alternatives following the tsunami that devastated other parts of the region.

Neda said key destinations that will fuel tourism growth include: Cebu, Bohol, Camiguin, Palawan, Manila, Zambales, Davao, Ilocos, Clark, Subic, Baguio, Batanes and Boracay.

If these and other tourist spots are marketed well, Neri said, the tourism sector could easily contribute a one-percentage point increase in the country's gross domestic product (GDP) growth.

"It will be good to increase our tourism budget by P1 billion to P2 billion. Now, we rely mostly on word of mouth, but we can achieve a lot more if we advertise," Neri said in a press briefing.

The country's chief economist also suggested that the government further liberalize the country's airlines by opening up more flights.

Neri said the Philippines has carried to attract more tourists when its Asian neighbors were devastated by the tsunami, which killed an estimated 200,000 and destroyed many tourist facilities.

Fernando Villegas, economist from the University of Asia and the Pacific, earlier said that one way for the Philippines to promote itself was to highlight its health services.

Since the Philippines is already a center of health care given, he said the country could market itself as a health care hub for foreigners that need services like spa, cosmetic surgeries and medical treatments.

"What happened to our neighboring countries was unfortunate and it seems that that we should not be happy about it. But while foreigners are looking for other destinations, the Philippines can very well be a tourist place for them," he said.

Tourist arrivals in the Philippines hit 1.84 million as of end-November last year, 10.6 percent more than the number in the same period the previous year.

Although the figure significantly improved, the tourism industry contributes only a measly 3 percent to GNP.

FACILITIES to buy moisturizers, such as the Banana Rice Terrace, could be further developed to spur growth of the tourism industry.

RENEWED interest in the world market for coconut-based products augurs well for the region's coconut farmers.

Prospects bright for coconut farmers in Eastern Visayas

PALO, Leyte—The Philippine Coconut Authority sees bright prospects for the region's more than 1.7 million coconut farmers this year.

"This is for the market is renewed interest in the benefits of coconut oil, and other products derived from coconuts, in both the local and world markets, according to Edilberto Sierra, chief of the PCA's Eastern Visayas unit.

The region could provide a good portion of the demand, he said, as coconut trees here will likely yield more nuts due to relatively good weather last year.

"We were bloated last year, because we did not experience destructive typhoons that could have affected our production," he told the business.

Sierra said there was market renewal of interest in copra, including oil and other products made from coconuts, from China, Korea and European countries, such as Germany.

"These countries have already signified their interest and willingness to import from us. The problem is not with the more than domestic. But with a projected high production, we could just tap these markets and can dictate for our country," he said.

Sierra admitted, however, that Eastern Visayas was still in the "infancy stage of consumer/end-user" of coconut products.

He said there was a need to improve the quality of these coconut products to make them more competitive and attractive to the world market.

Eastern Visayas ranks third among the country's coconut producing regions, with annual harvest of P17 million.

The region produces 1.6 billion tons of copra annually.

Jose A. Galicia, PIA Visayas Bureau

What exercise can and can't do

Part Two

ONE of the top reasons people exercise is to improve their appearance. Pretty can be a strong motivator. There is nothing wrong with wanting to look your best.

But if improving your appearance is the main reason your exercise, you should know and accept what it can and cannot do for you.

Exercise is not a cure-all for figure problems. You have to be realistic about what you can achieve so you do not get discouraged and quit. That's a real shame because being fit delivers so many other benefits absolutely necessary for your health.

Breasts

Breasts are composed of fatty tissues and milk glands. Their size is determined mainly by genetics. Chest exercises are designed to make the muscles under the breasts firmer so the entire area looks chiller but they cannot make the breasts bigger. Breasts do not have any muscles.

Chest exercises also cannot do much for sagging breasts because the skin and the ligaments stretching the breasts to the chest have already stopped beyond repair.

The opposite is true though with regards to exercise making breasts smaller. As you lose weight, fat cells in your breasts also shrink. If you are a large-breasted woman, this may be a pleasant side effect of exercise but if you have small breasts, you may not be so happy.

If you want to dramatically increase breast size or lift sagging breasts, you need a push-up bra or a plastic surgeon. If you want a drastic reduction in breast size, you can try to lose weight or have breast reduction surgery.

Calves

Most people don't score big in the calf area. Built a socially due to large calf muscles. This may be inherited or the muscles may be abnormally short and tight from wearing high heels. Doing uphill walking or engaging in sports that require a lot of jumping.

Doing calf stretches for 30 to 60 seconds several times a day as well as staying away from the offending activity (wearing lower heels, walking on a flat surface, and avoiding sports activity jumping) can help to bring the muscles back to their original length and make the calves look slimmer.

If, on the other hand, you want bigger calves, be prepared for hard work. It is difficult. Our calf muscles are made to move primarily small calories over bulky ones. Calf muscles are quite strong and require a lot of resistance to make them bigger.

Cellulite

Research suggests cellulite is not a special kind of fat but ordinary fat trapped under thin skin and connective tissue attached in a way that makes fat bulge. Exercise can help improve the appearance of cellulite by reducing the size of fat cells and increasing the size of muscle fibers in the cellulite prone areas.

It is highly speculative to expect exercise to give you flawless hips, thighs and buttocks if you have a genetic tendency to develop cellulite.

Treatments like mesotherapy and endermologie have not received procedures for eliminating fat and cellulite, are helpful but they are not permanent. Like exercise, you will have to do them regularly to maintain whatever results you achieve.

Stretched skin

Tight firm muscles can help to "puff" in stretched skin but only slightly for example. Beefing up the muscles of the abdomen can help somewhat to lessen the appearance of loose abdominal skin but only a little.

No amount of Pilates or core conditioning exercises will tighten skin that has become overstretched from pregnancy or obesity. A "tummy tuck" is the only solution.

If you lose weight drastically, take note that your skin may sag. (The older you are, the more likely this will happen). It is almost never to lose weight slowly to give your skin time to adjust to your new size.

Exercise does absolutely nothing for stretch marks.

Stubborn fat

Even when your weight and body fat percentage are normal, stubborn pockets of fat may remain. They are usually at the sides of the thighs (saddlebags) or lower abdomen (pouch) for women and around the waist (love handles) for men. Other people have them in the upper back.

No amount of spot exercises like leg lifts or abdominal crunches will remove these annoying pockets of fat. Nature has its reasons for storing fat in the fat deposits even if you are thin or smaller of normal.

In olden times, they may help you survive a long famine. This means you would have to become almost skeletal to get rid of the fat. That will be unhealthy and unfulfilling.

Invasive (liposuction) and non-invasive (lipodissolve, vacuotherapy etc.) cosmetic procedures may be the answer but be warned: if you do not maximize your weight or body fat percentage, you may develop new pockets of fat in other places.

Height

Exercise cannot make your bones longer but it can make you taller by improving your posture and perhaps by increasing the space between vertebrae. Pilates, in particular, has been touched with helping people achieve their true genetic height potential.

While there is no hard scientific evidence for this yet, many people claim to have "grown" an inch or two with regular Pilates sessions.

Weight

Exercise cannot do it all if you want to lose weight. No matter how much you work out, if you continue to stuff your face with starchy sugary and fatty food, you will still be overweight.

Exercise, together with sensible eating, is the best way to lose weight and maintain the weight has been or lost remember that the eating part is very important. Don't think that just because you exercise, you can eat whatever and as much as you want. You may end up fit but also fat.

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PLASMIN

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Front, side, back, side leg lift

THIS SERIES of exercises focus the front, side, and back of the thighs.

Equipment:
A sturdy piece of furniture to hold for balance. When you get stronger, use ankle weights optional.

Exercise technique:

1. Start with your right leg extended in front of you with toes touching the floor.
2. In one smooth controlled move, lift and lower your leg to 10 times.
3. Repeat the exercise lifting your leg sideways and backwards.

Performance tips:

1. Inhale as you lift your leg; inhale as you lower.
2. Lift only as high as you can without rounding or arching your back.
3. Take one second to lift and one second to lower.
4. When lifting to the side, keep your torso and lower facing forward.
5. Keep your supporting leg slightly bent if you feel it is uncomfortable to keep your knee straight.

Repetitions:
Do 10 repetitions per side.

Rx MEDICard

Take Charge Doc!

Dr. Nicky E. Montoya

Take Charge Doc! is your weekly question and answer guide on general health issues and illnesses. MEDICard's Medical Director, Dr. Nicky Montoya answers questions on health through the assistance and expertise of MEDICard's network of accredited specialists. And in a common thrust with the campaign of the government, Take Charge Doc! parallels its features on the Calendar of Health Events of the Department of Health.

What are some of the common signs and symptoms of cancer?

The signs and symptoms of cancer can usually be attributed to the organ or area involved, either as the origin of the disease or through its spread. These signs and symptoms are usually specific and distinct, however on occasions, they can be very subtle and non-specific. These symptoms take on more significance if one belongs to a high risk group for a particular cancer because of age, lifestyle habits or familial predisposition. The following signs and symptoms, individually or in combination, should alert one to consult a medical specialist if they are persistent over long periods (weeks) or progressively worsening despite conventional treatments: (1) A persistent mass or lump, (2) Pain, persistent and/or progressive, (3) Bleeding or discharge, (4) A non-healing wound or ulcer, (5) Changes in bowel habits, (6) Changes in voice or swallowing, (7) Persistent cough or difficulty breathing, (8) Headache, vomiting, seizures, weakness or changes in mental status, (9) Changes in vision, hearing or persistent nasal obstructions and (10) Unexplained weight loss.

It should be emphasized that in early stages, some cancers may NOT have any signs and symptoms. This underscores the value of the screening tests for certain cancers, e.g. uterine cervix, breast, prostate, etc. For particular individuals at risk, these tests offer early detection and may provide a higher potential for cure.

This week's feature question on cancer signs and symptoms was provided by **Dr. Gaudencio P. Vega**. Dr. Vega, a long time medical service provider of MEDICard, is a graduate of UP College of Medicine. He specializes in Internal Medicine and holds a subspecialty degree in Radio-Oncology. Dr. Vega holds clinic at the MRI section of Chinese General Hospital every Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 1 to 4 PM, at the Radiation Clinic of St. Luke's Medical Center every Tuesdays and Thursdays also from 1 to 4 PM and in the Cobalt Section of The Medical City Hospital every Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8 to 11 in the morning.

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EVOLVE

THE NOBLES and their children: Enrique Avalle with his mother, Pilar Roman Avalle; her sister Virginia A.; Gino Tantoco; wife Isel and husband Pedro Roman; Jason Avalle, husband of Pilar; and his son Eduardo.

SISTERS Tess with their hosts Stephanie Zobel with her fiancé, Frenchman Victor Grillon; with Alex Zobel Brown and her American husband, Scott Brown

SPAIN and Sigrid Djemal with Regina Garcia and her sons Coco and Carlo G.

PHILIPPINE Sobe's Chi Lijauco with her sister-pals, hostess-cum-Manchuy Garcia, his wife Bubu and son Raymund Garcia

TOGETHERNESS: John Castro with his sister Micki, their father Tito Castro of Fairways and Blue Waters and daughter Danika

FUN Pack. Anna Jalle with Carina Jardel, son-of-a-gun Louie Cruz and young restaurateur Mike Sanders Pérez

ABE and Miss Lizzie with Ms. Ria Pineda, who is vacationing from New York. Marlene Tantoco and her husband, international businessman Renato Enriquez

Bora gives spectacular welcome to 2005

PEARL of the Pacific royals: Greg Jansen, with his wife Heather Tirol and the princess of the Pearl, Rica T. Jansen

ABIG Bo gorgeous, unbeatable Bora ring recumbent 2005 was the most fabulous happening on the island, palongpon. There was a total sense of people, people, and more people from Cantor-Whaddle and Cabeza-pronalgar set.

The hottest action-action-Bora Bora's fine arts at the Big L—Pearl of the Pacific Resort and Spa. Wining, dining, the luxury beautiful and Friday's.

The Pearl, "Ms. 1 choice of lovers" and which has the coldest beach, hosted one of the most fun parties. At the front row, a few steps from the shore, ABS-CBN publishing's Bernie Liquet and peppy-attractive wife, Southern belle Gemma, and son Wade; Bit Lam and vivacious beauty Vicky Amador-Rotary Yuanzel and Charlene Sarlet watched the burst of spectacular colors in the sky. Rizzoli-sized good looking Gary Khadwaramian had eyes only for this sexy and young.

Better than NY

Internationally renowned Bora Bora-based culinary innovator Lorelei Sayoson, who says inclines the Big Apple every year and since at The Pearl, agreed that not even New York could compete with the unique experience of welcoming the new year on the island.

Host Young Marieta and his attractive best-friend wife, Tawny Lisa Amoranto, with their three handsome sons, were on their second New Year visit, palongpon.

Stella, brilliant Philippine Tatler asset, Chit Lijauco, with her daughter Daddy and husband Bill Cowsey, and Chit's son, Noah Marcopaul, with special girl friend Jessica, enjoyed the dazzling evening with their evasive and no precious and adorable hosts, our palongpon Greg Jansen, his wife, vibrant Heather Tirol, their good-looking son Albert and his wife, also a beautiful girl, Theresa Ortiz, and their two good-looking grandsons Max and Shawn.

Civilized people

Forever stunning Helen Yeiles looked so happy with current husband Russ Steinhoff and ex Dada, with their handsome sons Patrick and Daniel. Now, palongpon, that's what living civilized is all about, ha babe!

Countdown music—sounds from the floor-to-ceiling Filipino music—was provided by the swinging Solchini Band. The show was hosted by Charlie Youssef, hostess saved about the exotic paradise buffet prepared by top chef Tony Cuizon.

No one was worried about hangovers because the Pearl of the Pacific had the popular Bora spa that offered a perfect cure of the worst. Believe me, palongpon, after a Lymphatic Drainage Massage, which everyone raves about, you need not worry about the Bora-Bora wine-de-vine that feels like being inside an oxygen because of simple math.

No one also seemed to worry about the prices of Bora-Bora despite the limited location. At least not Lottie Cruz who, when I asked if he was concerned about the island's future, replied: "Tourists can never run us ruined. The only ones who can destroy paradise are [illegible] and those who do business... and also if and when corruption in local government exists because money will be drastically affected. It happened to Baguio and Puerto Galera. The tourists packed, left and moved on. I hope Bora will not become paradise lost one day."

Actor Rodrigo Rodrigo, compare Sir Orlando bakery and his wife, musician hosted 150 guests that enjoyed the tale-based Cool Grey from Eve. to end the singing of the children.

Dividend Wedding-Wedding diner, Bukidnon Gov. Joe Zubiri, brought his entire family to spend New Year in Bora. He even went around with the announcement of the children's books and supplies that coming school. Not bad huh?

Two years down, 100 years ago: elbow to elbow at theatrical salons champagne and wine flowed, thanks to the superb hosting of that fashion, hardworking pacific-hotel, Rep. Tony Boy Floirendo, actress.

The fantastic band pumped up the beat with Latin swing and salsa numbers, while audience participation [illegible] sang "Feliz."

Hostess having a blast included hostess Miss Universe Margie Moran Floirendo, who was having a ball with Percy and Vicky Perez de Tagle, Ritchie and Regina Garcia, with three special looking twins; Johnny Velasquez and Maripil Bascot.

Without batting an eyelash

Maurice Arnache

Photos by Alex Van Haaren using Kodak Tony Mann System

Birthday celebration

M. Lukes medical director Dr. Jessie Gamsang blew the candle on his birthday cake, with Andy Bautista.

Investment banker, Sonny Sanchaura, with his handsome JP and Bryan, together with John Gaddi, pushed the ladies' tanned sexy curves on the dance floor. Dashing Frank Dr. George Sarabia swept the dance steppers, a radiant Becky Gatchi, into his arms, in a private salute to their forthcoming wedding in Athens, Greece.

Gov. Daniel Kingson was with his gang and the gorgeous Che S. also there were Brigo and Marietta Zobel.

Super pals, Agatha Rose Rivera Aguilla and Arlene Spirit's chair Sarah Duane were the prettiest ones that they were, graciously escorted three girls Andrea Dawson, Christabel Cruz Carmencita Pardo and Jeanette Goodbourn.

Sarah Ongpin, previously named Carla Garcia and Marco Gobergan, are bound to Barcelona, chained till the pretty girl.

At the stroke of midnight, the whole countryside of Bora Bora became [illegible] a spectacular, multicolored pyrotechnic show. It looked like all the countries were competing for the best display. It was absolutely breathtaking! awesome, palongpon.

Proud of the Pacific jumped the gaudy evening their fireworks 15 minutes before midnight. Needless to say, they had the best show in the sky that night.

AT DOS Amigos: Bora before New Year's Eve. Super fans of the Diamond Sands Rep. Tony Boy Floirendo, architect Aaron Mendoza, gorgeous Carol Garcia and Carlo Reggio (standing) Vicky Zobel, Marieta Z., Maria Berico and Sigrid Djemal

CJ Jansen-a, Kari Pupon, Josh Lee and Kaori Espinosa

Quinn Fansler with Pinoy's and Tony Boong and Cherish Chiongbian

Dj. Dave Jacob and Raji Mais

GORGEOUS sisters two leg designer Bea Valdes and her sister Margo V.

JAMES and Laura Bevans

ULTRA glam Vicky Zobel and former Manila model, now Madrid resident, Miss Soo

PARTYING dudes: A.J. with Michael and Marvin Mendoza at the Diamond

GANG of three: Tin Lara with Vicky Amador and Emma Lopez at the Pearl of the Pacific

LAWYER Liza Araneta-Marcos with Enrique regalare, Marieta and Migs Zobel

CLOSE pals: Rita Soriano and D'Boy Eseba

WHAT a party! Gov. Bingbong Marcos, with TV's hot glam gal Cris Delos

VICKY Z., Shelli Rodrigues, Jessy Z. and Mars Pelicon

ALL in the family: Margie Floirendo with her niece Diana Marie, Philip Mendoza with his daughter Nathalie M., Margie's sister, Lolita Mendoza-Lorrie Reynoso and JC Tingco

PRETTY young girls: Margie Gilmore and Anna Jalle at the Pearl

Be proud of yourself

SOME people find it easy to like themselves while others have great difficulty. It's all about body image—accepting who you are and being proud of it.

In a survey of 1,000 women aged 16-60, Dr. Rosemary Cooke and Ruth Stangel Bloom, Ph.D., assistant professors of Psychiatry at the University of Connecticut, found that 60 percent of women loathed their body shape or size, very important. An astounding 91 percent said they wanted to change their bodies.

The survey found that 25 percent were unhappy about their faces, 40 percent muscular tone, 52 percent breast size, 40 percent total appearance.

Form vs. function

Good looks and good figure in people do not guarantee a good body image. No matter how many times you have your face or body redone through cosmetic surgery you could never level with yourself how if you do not learn to be proud of yourself.

A fantastic form does not guarantee freedom from your insecurities. Take the case of Juliet A. 33, she realized three years ago, during one of her Thursday Although still a bride, she felt she did not measure up to the image she had of the perfect body to what she was 23.

She went to the first plastic surgeon she met without looking at his credentials. Getting herself oversized breast implants, she was satisfied at first with the results. But as time went on, she started to question deeper as well.

But after two weeks, she realized she made a mistake. She developed a fever and infection in her left breast. As a result, she looked abnormal. She felt, now in pain and couldn't work properly.

She rushed to the clinic of Dr. Ford Gamboa. According to the good surgeon, Juliet's case is not uncommon. "There is still hope after surgery gone wrong," he says. "But the best policy is still to be happy with yourself."

In his years of practice, Dr. Gamboa found more men were more conscious about their looks than educated ago. Different genders have different preferences in terms of changing their looks.

This trend for sex has entered, in-

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

preparation, now in late 30. Women struggle to change their nose or eyes, undergo liposuction or facelift. Men want for breast augmentation, nose change, liposuction, facelift.

Did the changes improve his patients' satisfaction rate? Dr. Gamboa said 98 percent were happy with the results and the positive impact they had on their lives. Some two percent, however, wanted their old shapes back, asking him to undo the surgery.

Apparently, being unimpressed by the changes plunged them into depression. His advice to those considering cosmetic surgery:

1. Mentally prepare yourself for the changes and accept them as something from your own choice.

2. Choose a doctor well: good and evil credentials and track record. Make sure he is a member of the Philippine Society for Cosmetic Surgery or the Philippine Society for Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.

3. Make sure you are physically well.

Dr. Gamboa stresses, "Know your limits." An overdone face and body can appear unnatural. Know when to stop knowing stop and back off.

And victims of Juliet? Her breast was repaired by because of the infection and new implants proportional to her height and bone structure were placed. Her nose was reshaped to fit her bone structure.

Stop judging yourself

You may be harsh and cruel in judging yourself. If you are guilty of this, stop right away. Here's a little but subjective basis checklist to fill up before you:

1. Do you think thin people are generally more competent than overweight people?

2. Do you think thin people are more able to feel sexual satisfaction than overweight people?

3. Are most people you admire slim?

4. Do you want to be thinner?

5. Do you watch parts of your body would denigrate?

6. Do you think you would lose many chances of sexual partners if you were thinner?

7. Do you think job opportunities would be greater if you were thinner?

8. Do you put off activities or meeting acquaintances until you are thinner?

9. Do you think overweight people don't deserve job promotions, school partners's affection or respect?

10. Do you think most men and women shouldn't date?

11. Do you think most people don't try hard enough to be slim?

12. Do you consider yourself "bad" when you eat certain foods and "good" when you restrict your eating?

13. Do you believe you are overweight?

Interpretation: If you have more than one yes answer to questions 1-6, then you do believe, like the majority, that overweight isn't good enough and that it thinner you will easily lead to success. If you answer yes to questions 9-12, you accept the message that thin is good, fat is bad. If your answers to yes to question 13, you believe that your body is not good enough. (From "The Body Image Trap" by Hilton Crook)

Good enough

Whether or not you are good enough is entirely up to you. Your inner voice is never wrong, once you quiet your mind and other people's chatter.

Sit still and honestly ask yourself if changes are in order. Then, for three days, go to nutritionist and consult on "How You Have Ate" project.

Each time you want to do something, read a new diet or exercise program or munch on a certain kind of food, or start a new relationship, ask yourself: Is this good enough for me?

Be guided by the body, mind and spirit rule. Love yourself. That's a good science to say.

Love and light!

Reference: Dr. Raul Guerrero at 7224972; 8159660

Is out-of-body experience simply a neurological disorder?

INNER AWARENESS

Justine T. Encarnacion

HOW does science look at the phenomenon of out-of-body experience (OOBE) or astral projection?

Mr. Australian friend, Donald McDowell, a well-known chiropractor and psychic researcher from Australia who is married to a Filipina chiropractor, Annie, gave me a copy of an article from the internet explaining OOBE from a neurological standpoint.

The article OOBE and their Neural Basis I began with a description of a typical out-of-body experience:

"I was in bed and about to fall asleep when I had the distinct impression that I was at the ceiling level looking down on my body on the bed. I was very startled and frightened, immediately (almost) I felt that I was consciously back in the (body on the) bed again."

The author, Professor Olaf Blanke of the Laboratory of Cognitive Neuroscience at Swiss Federal Institute says "several neurological evidence shows that these experiences are related to an interference with the temporo-parietal junction of the brain." This is the part of the brain that gives a person a sense of self-hood.

Ten percent

Blanke says OOBE occurs in about 10 percent of the population, most of the world's cultures and seven hundred out-of-body accounts.

I wonder how he arrived at the 10 percent figure. I would assume majority of people have such experiences. However, many are reluctant to tell their stories.

Blanke adds: "Some clinicians have observed OOBE in association with various neurological conditions, but mainly in epilepsy patients and migraine. These early reports have also allowed us to link OOBE with defective visual, vestibular, and multi-sensory processing."

Blanke's new discovery regard OOBE as not normal. They suggest epilepsy.

Blanke says: "On the basis of these findings, my team proposed a cognitive model for OOBE relating them to failure of integration of proprioceptive, tactile, and visual information of one's body in personal space."

Let me try to say this in simple language. In a nutshell this, we know exactly where we are in relation to our body and surroundings. Our senses ourselves as being inside our physical body.

When we think or sense ourselves to be out of our body that is because there is an interference or anomaly in our sense of where we are in relation to our surrounding. We seem to think we are outside our body but actually we are not. In other words, our awareness that OOBE is merely a hallucination.

Because science has no knowledge of the astral body, its characteristics or powers, it ascribes a model based strictly on physiological and neurological evidence.

Contradictions

But certain facts contradict this. If OOBE is merely hallucination or a mental delusion, how come there are people who see the astral body or etheric double of someone being an HOBE? Sometimes the astral body is seen very far from the physical body of the sleeping person. If a theory contradicts a proven fact or experience, something's wrong with the theory.

Some scientists propose the most incredible theories just to maintain their own assumptions about the nature of physical reality. For example, one scientist theory on why sadness of 90s, Indonesia, Brazil, India and the Philippines are able to walk on fire is "The natives have developed very powerful sweat glands on their feet, so that when they touch the burning charcoal in fire they are not scared, thus endowing their feet of the fire. The sweat glands cool the fire and therefore enable them to walk on it without."

It would be nice if proponents of this theory tried walking barefooted on fire to test their theory.

Despite its obvious inadequacy it continues to flourish and getting fast, although I don't have their sweat glands. Our theory is accepted by most scientists.

Near-death experience

Another phenomenon where scientific explanation runs down are those with near-death experience (NDE). In a typical NDE, as studied by Dr. Raymond Moody, a person is pronounced clinically dead. In that state, the person sees himself floating through a tunnel with a bright light at the end. He moves toward the light, usually seen as a being who asks him questions.

The being of light tells him it's not set his time and to go back to earth. He awakens and finding the pain of an accident, if it is an accident or labor pains, etc. Then his/her life is transformed. He feels a sense of mission and exhibits previously absent psychic powers.

Attempts matching with experimental data have not been a difficult to duplicate. They think NDE is caused by a lack of oxygen in the brain.

When pilots are in a rotating machine, the centrifugal force temporarily deprives the brain of oxygen. Pilots have reported seeing a tunnel of light, a feeling of floating or being out of the body and going through a tunnel where a seemingly being of light tells them it is not yet time time and they have to go back. They wake up remembering every detail of the transient, like total mystical NDE.

But there's one big difference. Pilots who experience this do not develop a sense of mission, and they do they acquire a new insight into their life. They are not transformed like those with actual NDE and do not develop psychic powers. These facts are ignored by scientists.

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Take a 'Happy Walk' Feb. 6

THE DOWN Syndrome Association of the Philippines is holding "Happy Walk" Feb. 6 around the Araneta Center, Cubao, Quezon City, to kick off the annual observance of the National Down Syndrome Consciousness Month.

Similar activities will be held simultaneously in Cebu and Davao.

Avoid Mother and Development Secretary Cristina "Dinky" Bolinao will lead the walk in Manila. Participants will include people with Down's Syndrome, volunteers, doctors, therapists, teachers, students, parents, private and public personalities.

Registration will begin at 6:30 a.m.

A brief program and fellowship will follow at Shoppers World.

Other activities lined up during the month include golf tournament, free medical and dental clinic, and other sports events.

It is estimated that now child with the syndrome is born every two hours in the Philippines. But parents often do not know how to provide proper care and where to get immediate medical attention for the children.

The Philippines has some 100,000 children with Down Syndrome. The Down Syndrome Association of the Philippines (DSAP) seeks to encourage acceptance by the community of people with the disability and help create for those education and employment. It also tries to educate people on the disability to dispel bias, promote understanding, and help parents allow their children to lead normal lives.

Everyone with Down Syndrome, who knows someone who does or just wants to support the cause is invited to join "Happy Walk." For more information about the event and other activities and services for individuals, call 6363366 or 6363365 local 2148.

Down Syndrome Association of the Philippines Inc., 2/F #372 Agrifina Building, Cubao corner Hobijuan Street, Guadalupe Viejo, Makati City; tel. 8909632 or 8909636; e-mail dsaap@hotmail.com and website http://groups.yahoo.com/group/dsaap.

DSAP Davao Branch Office c/o ABESA COR., Ditmon Complex, Lanang Commercial Center, Davao City; Telefax: (082)2342280

DSAP-Cebu Branch Office c/o Jeanne Ang Foundation Inc., S/F Cebu Holdings Center, Cebu Business Park, Cebu City; tel. (032)2320981; fax: (032)2320065

Affiliate member: Bicolnet, c/o Chabi's Pita (054)4050441; 4041716

Free cataract surgeries

THE HELEN PEW Academy of Ophthalmology (IAO) marks its 60th year Jan. 29 with the Brien Viguerag Tave, $2,000 eg Lives."

PAO will conduct 60,000 free cataract surgeries all over the country starting with missions of The Quezon Institute, E. Rodriguez, S.R.C. Institute on